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Rhythm

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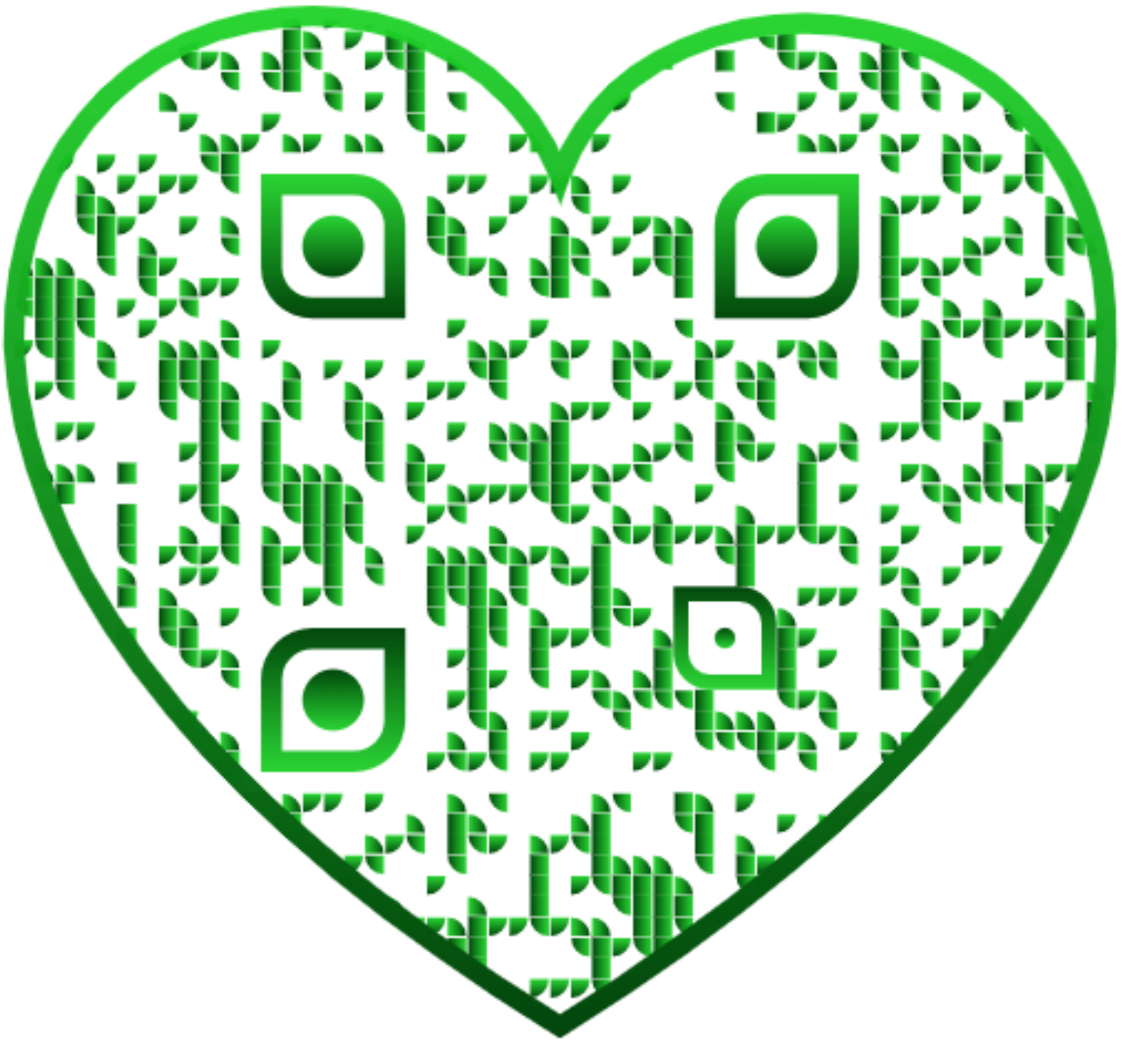

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HELLO AND WELCOME BACK TO RHYTHM...

Once again, I'm going to start by saying that I hope that this finds you and yours all keeping safe and well as we find ourselves confined to our houses for the third time... All of us at *Rhythm* were incredibly touched to receive so many positive messages when we were finally able to get the magazine back up and running at the end of last year. Thank you, it's very much appreciated – as is the support of each and every one of you that buys an issue or a subscription in this very challenging period.

During the first round of lockdowns in 2020, I was introduced to Jim Toscano – a freelance drummer, educator, clinician and online technology coach based in New York. We talked about how important it was for us all to stay connected during these strange times, and the incredible number of drummers from around the world – from hobbyists to seasoned pros – who were contacting Jim to get help and advice about the technical challenges of getting set up at home. From that initial conversation were sown the seeds for our cover feature, 'Drum Studio Tech' – Jim's comprehensive guide to creating a killer online setup. My sincere thanks go to Jim and to three of his famous 'clients', Dave Weckl, David Garibaldi and Stanton Moore, who kindly agreed to take us behind the scenes of their own professional studios in three exclusive video interviews...

Also this issue, we welcome back Gary Husband, Pat Illingworth, You Me At Six's Dan Flint and the irrepressible Cindy Blackman Santana as she celebrates the release of her new solo album, *Give The Drummer Some*. Sarah Tomek reminisces about Led Zeppelin's 'Fool In The Rain' in 'Tracks That Inspired A Generation', and Gavin Harrison chooses his 'Six Of The Best'.

Stu Warmington returns with his marching series, introducing us to drumlines from across the globe, Tom Bradley and the reviews team are checking out a plethora of new gear in our review section, and our Beats Working tutors are ready – as always – to help you improve your drumming with a comprehensive series of lessons, top tips and techniques.

Last, but not least, we also remember the late, great Bobby Orr – a true giant of British jazz drumming, fondly remembered by his friends, with a very special party trick!

I hope you enjoy the issue and look forward to seeing you next time,

Louise King

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Contributing to this issue...

David West

Once a proud destroyer of single-ply drumheads, since switching to jazz, David now caresses the drums as softly as a summer breeze. There's still a part of him that misses breaking sticks all the time – it's the part that grew up on Cozy Powell and Alex Van Halen. Part of the *Rhythm* team for nearly 20 years, he has interviewed many of his heroes, including Steve Gadd and Zigaboo Modeliste.

WHAT'S GOT YOU EXCITED?

"I've been getting a buzz from listening to some amazing congueros, like Alexandra Alban, Kachiro Thompson, Luis Conte. It's a great incentive to keep my hands in shape!"

Jim Toscano

A NYC freelance drummer, educator and clinician, Jim is the author of *Filling In The Grooves: The Ultimate Guide To Drum Fills*. He has studied with world-class drummers Dom Famularo, Marko Djordjevic and Claus Hessler, and has built a successful private teaching and technology coaching practice with more than 200 students. He is currently working on building an online technology course for drummers with friend and partner Scott Kettner.

WHAT'S GOT YOU EXCITED?

"Dave Weckl's Saturday livestreams and Stanton Moore's *Wednesday Night Live* weekly videos!"

Rich Chamberlain

Raised on his dad's AC/DC records, Rich has been channelling his inner Phil Rudd since he was a nipper, with varying degrees of success. And while there's little danger of him laying down thundering grooves at a packed stadium any time soon, snce joining the *Rhythm* team in 2009, Rich has not only had the pleasure of interviewing all of his drum heroes, but also watching new heroes emerge. This month's interviewee Dan Flint falls into the latter category he says.

WHAT'S GOT YOU EXCITED?

"Seeing our four-month-old son open his first drum on Christmas morning – we can't wait for a noisy household!"

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Six of the Best with Gavin Harrison

DRUMMING FOR AUTISM!

Clem Burke Drumming Project blazes a new trail

It comes as little surprise to hear that drumming is good for you. Not only does it release those endorphins as we joyously bash away at the tubs, but it also helps to keep us fit and healthy. In fact, over the last decade the Clem Burke Drumming Project (CBDP) has provided some incredible insights into the links between drummers and the fitness of top-level athletes.

But, even with the project's sizable existing pedigree, 2021 is shaping to be something of a landmark year. That is because they are now drawing parallels between time behind the kit and a positive impact on individuals with autism.

Latest research from the project has linked learning to play the drums with positively changing the brain's structure and function, something that has resulted in enhanced behaviour in a school and home environment among individuals experiencing autism.

The researchers (Dr Marcus Smith, University of Chichester; Prof Steve Draper, Hartpury University; Dr Ruth Lowry, University of Essex and Prof Steve Williams, Kings College London) believe that drumming interventions could aid those with certain neurological conditions, and they are about to begin a wider-scale study to prove exactly that.

Dr Marcus Smith, Reader in Sport and Exercise Physiology and lead scientist on the project, commented on the beneficial opportunities that drumming brings: "Drumming is a unique activity that is both physically and mentally challenging. It acts as a potent intervention in experimental trials that seek to provide insight into how humans learn and subsequently behave".

Dean of Research at Hartpury University Professor Steve Draper added: "There is enormous potential to improve physical and mental wellbeing through learning to drum".

One drummer closely associated with the project is Mark Richardson of Skunk Anansie, pictured, who believes that the benefits of drumming are becoming increasingly evident: "It is an absolute pleasure to assist Dr Marcus Smith on his mission to discover the benefits of drumming on the drummer," he said.

"The research of the CBDP on both the mental and physical aspects of playing the drums shows that drumming can be used as an intervention for a variety of physical and mental health challenges. It is also clear from the research that the benefits of drumming are undeniable, and that all institutions would benefit from having a drum room.

"Arguably, the marginalisation of music in our schools has meant music departments and individual lessons have been pushed out to external hubs. These music hubs often involve extra costs and can be unaffordable for those who need it most.

"I am very much looking forward to being involved in further studies on the effects of drumming on autism and dementia, and who knows where this might lead? My hope is that drumming becomes an essential part of the wellbeing programme of every school, care home, hospital and even prison. After all, if it works for one of us it can work for all of us."

The project is set to take its work into a number of special schools for drumming events and activities, kicking off as soon as can be allowed this year, and it is hoped that the provision will expand across the UK.

For more details, and to register an interest in taking part in future trials, take a look at **clemburkedrummingproject.org**

Image: Mark Latham

Roland
porter

DUST PALACE UNVEILS ITS FIRST FULL BOUTIQUE SAMPLE LIBRARY

Spring, Echo, Distort, the new boutique sample library by Joe Clegg's Dust Palace, squeezes more than 1,000 unique samples in its reassuringly sizeable pack.

The pack does not just feature the impressive talents of Ellie Goulding, Mumford and Sons and Clean Bandit sticksman Joe Clegg, however, as Clegg invited a handful of top names to contribute to the collection! Adam Marcello (Katy Perry), Andrew Marshall (Billie Eilish) and Gunnar Olsen (Bruce Springsteen) all answered the call to help create additional royalty-free drum loops and pre-sets.

The set features three classic drum machines that have been sampled through six analogue effect units – ultimately yielding a mighty treasure trove of more than 1,000 samples. All of which can be yours for a mere £49.

Those guys and girls at Dust Palace have clearly been exceptionally busy as they have also revealed KIK/SNR, a free pack featuring 52 one-shot samples recorded with a vintage '60s kick and a '70s snare processed through 12 of their favourite analogue effects units.

For more details: dust-palace.com.

Image: Jennifer McCord

HIT LIKE A GIRL
"Play it like you mean it."
Hit Like A Girl 2021 Spokesperson Giulliana Merello (Karol G)
Join the celebration of female drummers and beatmakers— and the 10th Anniversary of Hit Like A Girl.
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photo by Nikolai Puc

SNAPSHOT

This Moment In History

Tony Williams

12th December 1945 – 23rd February 1997

"My dearest desire was to play like Max Roach, or to play like Art Blakey, and because of that I learned what the drums can do and what they have done in the past. It's like learning a vocabulary. If you want to learn how to speak French the way you want to, you first have to learn to speak French the correct way by learning all of the idiomatic phrases and all the proper grammar, and then you can start to express yourself..."

Rhythm, December 1990

Image: David Redfern/Redferns

Image: Vito Ingerto

Introducing

MADDEN KLASS

Double headliner sets are no problem for prog rock's next star drummer

This has always been my dream," says Madden Klass. The New York drummer balances playing progressive rock with Space Junk Is Forever with studying at Berklee College of Music. Being in demand, she took a year off from Berklee to tour with Wheatus and Mike Doughty, drumming with both acts every night. "This was a huge, unexpected bonus," she says. "I was really happy to take the time off, get some experience and use that to get even more focussed."

How did you join the band Space Junk Is Forever?

"I had just gotten to Berklee, I was having a good time, but I wasn't really playing with anybody yet. I went on Facebook and saw somebody posted looking for a drummer, paid rehearsals and gigs, and I answered in five seconds – 'Hey, I'm interested!' Jordan [Holt, organist and bandleader] sent me his music, and I couldn't believe what I was hearing. It was like all this old prog – it took me right back to ELP, Rush, Gentle Giant... I was like, 'Wow, I really connect with this'. I learned the crap out of his stuff. I didn't want to come any less prepared than having every note to the tee. The music is so complicated it can't be any other way.

"I learned all of Jordan's inflections, he wrote all the drum demos, and that was it, he took me on. At first it was going to be a job, but now it's really a band – we're writing together, we're collaborating... it's become one of the biggest parts of my life."

How do you approach creating parts for the band?

"It's very much just by instinct, and whatever I've been listening to most recently will have a huge say in what I'm going to play – but it's fun to experiment. Originally, Jordan wrote all the drums, but during quarantine we've written a whole record from start to finish as a band, which is the first time we've ever done that. Some songs came to me – I do what feels good, try to add a lot of texture. I take from my influences, a lot of Stewart Copeland, Neil Peart, and sometimes I'm like, 'Hey, I don't know what you want, but I know how your brain works, can you just give me some idea?' He'll do that for me, and I'll pull from it."

What's on your planner for 2021?

"I'm going to be, tentatively, heading down to Memphis to do some recordings with Mike Doughty this winter, possibly June as well. There is talk of work with Wheatus. I'm hoping my bands will be able to plan weeks where we get together, we all get tested, we stay at an Airbnb and just write and record. And just finishing up school while I have the time.

"I'm going to keep practicing as much as I can and really getting ready for whatever is to come while the world is on pause." **David West**

Key kit: *Ludwig Classic Oak drums, Meinl Byzance cymbals, Vic Firth sticks, Big Fat Snare, Booty Shakers*

Image: Rebecca Need-Menear

Introducing

WILL GLASER

Jazz drummer explores improvisation and embracing the mistakes

"There's nowhere to hide," says Will Glaser about his new album *Climbing In Circles*, recorded in a trio with saxophonist Matthew Herd and pianist Liam Noble. "It's really intimate, and it's quite an interesting opportunity to explore other elements of the drums that you can't necessarily do if you're playing with a bass or a larger ensemble." The album mixes bold explorations of jazz standards and 'Lonely' by Tom Waits with free improvisations.

What do you enjoy about the trio or duo formats with piano and sax?

"Melodically speaking, the textures you use, you can be slightly more dense in terms of the range of the instrument – playing more on the toms, using the drums that would potentially muddy the sonic breadth of the band. One of my favourite records of all time is a Lester Young recording with Nat King Cole on piano and Buddy Rich on drums. It's so beautiful.

"Something that was much more common at the beginning of the century was that the piano player would be expected to play like a bass player because you wouldn't always have a bass player. It pushes you in different directions, to improvise and think in different ways."

There's a variety of styles on the album, from free jazz to swing.

"It all feels the same to me, it's just different corners of the same bizarre shape. We set out at the beginning to try to improvise freely, but also to create an improvisation that has a really strong characteristic, as if it had been composed – and then we try to do the reverse with the composition. We see which ways we can bend it. The mistakes were all part of the music; that's what we wanted to capture."

Where did you record?

"The Fish Factory, Harlesden. We were all in the same room, so we get that nice open, almost chamber music sound. I love drums that sound open and not just dead as is so common these days. It's nice to hear the room and the length of the note. That goes back to the setting, duos and trios. I don't worry about taking up too much of the sound – you can really hear the instrument."

What kit did you use?

"I have a beautiful '40s Slingerland Radio King. I didn't use the bass drum, because the bass drum is 24". It's a 14"x7" snare, 13" and 14" rack toms, a 16" floor tom (which I used as a bass drum). I do tend to tune my drums lower of recent years – that's partly to do with the sustain. It just feels warmer. It's not very common anymore, and it's nice to be a stick in the mud and go the other way.

"I'm hugely influenced by early jazz drummers – Baby Dodds, Zutty Singleton – as well as swing drumming and New Orleans drumming. It's all ringing drums. There's more wobble; it's a bit more rickety." **David West**

Key kit: *Vintage Slingerland drums, Vic Firth sticks, Remo drumheads*

Sarah Tomek

'Fool In The Rain'
Led Zeppelin – *In Through The Out Door* (1979)
Drummer: John Bonham

"I was young, maybe 13, when I first heard this track. I just remember how good it felt, what a cool groove it had, and wondering if I would ever be able to play it!

"It really was unlike anything else I had heard up until that point. I was a pre-teen in pop tunnel vision with my Michael Jackson, En Vogue and MC Hammer – now you know my age! – and I discovered it right around the time those musical tastes were just starting to change. 'Fool In The Rain' was the start of my Led Zeppelin obsession, and it was my first experience of a shuffle like that.

"What was it about the drummer and drumming that made such a big impression? Command. Pocket. Control. Feel. Bonham was behind the vibe control on this track and, to this day, it remains a special one to me in Zeppelin's catalogue. It's so slick; the groove falls in that pocket so sweetly that it's impossible not to sway to it, and it has that seamless 12/8 shuffle that later switches to a 6/4 feel in the verses... The guitar solo was total Page, but with an octave pedal – that, again, I had never come across before.

"When the band hits the bridge with the whistles and timbales, the song moves into a 2/4 samba. Bonham's 32nd-note fill out of the bridge, back into that slick 12/8 shuffle, leads the way to a four-bar call and response between the timbale and Bonham's kit. If you were to look up 'rock drumming perfection' in the dictionary, this song would be in there.

"After hearing this track, it was one of the few times I let my father tell me how to play! He broke down the whole shuffle pattern and had me playing it at 8bpm, making sure I got it clean. I just continued to work on it from there, and it's something I still emulate to this day. My attempt at an 'ode to Bonham' is on 'Hangin', from Them Vibes's *Electric Fever*. Although, I think that kick drum was actually a 28".

"As I am currently playing Bonham Ludwig Amber Vistalites and the matching Paiste cymbals, I can definitely confirm that, yes, this track did end up having a big impact on my future setup choices.

"Unfortunately, John Bonham passed before I was born, but when I saw Robert Plant backstage once, all I could do was 'fan girl' from afar and stare at him!"

TRACKS THAT INSPIRED A GENERATION

★★★★★

Images: Kat Benzova

Welcome back

Pat Illingworth

James Taylor Quartet, Sessions

Image: Andrew McKinney

From homemade lockdown grooves to Abbey Road

How have you coped this year?

"In March the gigs started getting cancelled, a couple of tours fell through and the writing was on the wall that this was going to be more than a few weeks off.

"On a personal level, I had a crazy year even before COVID-19 because we had a house fire last October, so we had to move out of our house while it got repaired. Then my father died, so I needed time to reset. I did that for about a month, doing very little music at all. But then I felt like I was missing playing, so I set up kick, snare and hats in the spare room in the house we were renting and started putting a few beats down.

"I put them on my Instagram and a few people jumped on it. I was making music and connecting with people, some that I hadn't met before. I turned that into a little series I called #illbeats. I'm going to pursue that a little bit further because it felt really creative. That's given me a taste of doing a project for myself after being a session musician for so long."

What came out of it?

"I've got a lot of musician friends on Instagram – @pat_illingworth – some of them used the grooves I posted to create their own tracks. They took my short phone videos and added extra instruments. They're not studio quality, but they're pretty cool, so I reposted them as a series. It was really interesting to see how my beats were used in such different ways. It really kept me going over total lockdown, and it inspired me, it became a symbiotic thing. The biggest accolade I got was when Questlove commented on one of my posts saying it was funky – that was the finest endorsement I could ever have from an absolute hero."

The James Taylor Quartet did a lockdown livestream from Ronnie Scott's. How was that?

"We've played some rip-roaring gigs at Ronnie's over the years, so to play to just a few staff and an online audience was quite surreal. We were having such a ball playing together again that we just imagined the vibe of a crowd! It was really cathartic to be back out there. A month later we went to Italy, and we played a socially distanced gig to humans at Blue Note Milan.

"I was at Abbey Road last week doing a session (James writes production music used on ads and films) – this was for a company called Audio Network we've worked with before. It's always massively gratifying to be in that studio. The engineers are just top notch – they've got so much amazing gear, and some of the mics are ones that were used on classic Beatles sessions. The history is in the walls." **David West**

Key kit: *Canopus drums, Istanbul Agop cymbals, Remo drumheads, Vic Firth SD2 Bolero sticks, Protection Racket cases*

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Image: Geoffrey Oat

Welcome back

Gary Husband

JOHN MCLAUGHLIN & THE 4TH DIMENSION, SESSIONS

The drummer and keys player stays inspired on and off the road

What have you been up to during lockdown?
"The drumming side of what I do has taken quite a backseat naturally, because most of the work I do as a drummer is playing in live situations. That's completely been on hold. Where I've been lucky, I have this keyboard aspect to my life, so I've been active doing a lot of compositional projects.

"I have a great friend, the legendary Chick Corea, and we did a file-sharing duet together and came up with a nine-minute episode of spontaneous tag-along playing. Stuff like that, really, would not have happened in regular times, so it's interesting to see what can be done – try to remain inspired, because without that we've got nothing, have we?"

You've been releasing drumming videocast lessons?
"It's very satisfying in light of the fact I'm discovering that a lot of people are finding great benefit from it. What I'm trying to put across is largely motivational. It really transcends the technical aspect. It's more what we go through as artists to get our message across, how to be more proactive in the career, how to get to grips with working with people, how to really believe in yourself, believe in what you do, get behind it with a lot of conviction and stay true to your own ideas.

"It's encouraging methods that I hold true, which I don't see around on a regular basis online, plus it's non-subscription. I like to give people the choice to dip in and out, to see a title and say, 'That's for me', and see how they like it, in the hope that it inspires them to try another one.

"It's just me and my partner doing the videos. I've been doing the music, sound, and the messages; she's doing the filming, set design, the lighting and everything else, so it's nice to keep it a family-based endeavour. If we can inspire people, I'm very, very happy."

One module covers some of your drumming with Allan Holdsworth. How was it revisiting that older material?
"It all seems like yesterday. It was so deep an awakening into a creative sphere of music with someone who allowed me to explore my own way of doing things, not to copy anybody else. He'd say, 'What do you *feel* to do for this?' He gave me license to really explore this deeper creative part of me, which was a fantastic liberation.

"I benefitted from that in such a big way that it won't leave me. Even though he's gone, his spirit and this whole creative angle on conveying something meaningful in music is alive and well in me. I have my reservations about some of the performances on the records, but at least they were of a very creative nature, and I'm happy they are there. It was nice to celebrate that. That's probably the biggest selling of all the videocasts we've done so far."

You've recently become a Paiste player?
"I've had two big changes now in my drumming life. I'll never stop loving Zildjian instruments, but sometimes a change is a very healthy thing. This certainly is a change. My first experience of hearing drummers playing Paiste was perhaps the ECM guys like Jack DeJohnette. I was very attracted to the worldliness and certainly the 'Europeanness' inherent in the personality of their beautiful instruments.

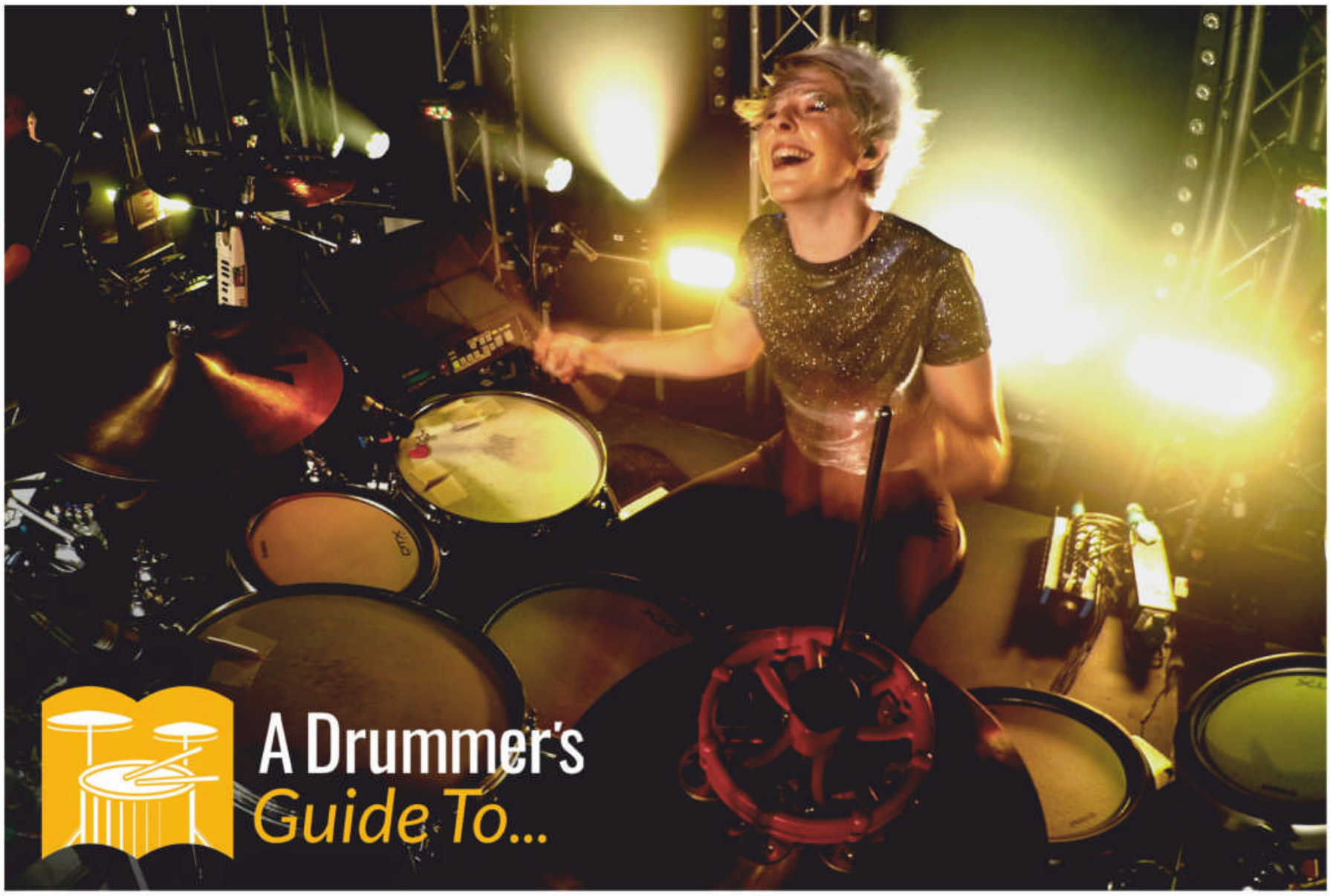
"I've also changed back to my old home with Promark – again, a very positive move. Also, in the outfit I work for with John McLaughlin, The 4th Dimension, our great drummer, Ranjit Barot, has become a Paiste player. Listening to Ranjit onstage, it's a great shop window for me to hear another drummer play these instruments and to try them in a soundcheck."

With The 4th Dimension, how do you shift from playing keyboards to jumping on the drums and trading off with Ranjit?
"Schizophrenia has a lot to answer for there! That and being a Gemini, so I've got this constant double aspect thing. I go to the drums cold, so it's quite a physical transition because it's straight in the deep end and power playing from the get-go. I'm priming myself because I know it's coming up – in a minute there will be a lot of adrenaline happening, and I'm psyching myself up while at the keyboard.

"I think the hardest part is going the *other* way, back to keyboards. That really involves a lot more sensitivity in the hands than some of this brutal exchange on the drums. But people like that! The keyboard player gets up and starts wailing on the drums – it's always a crowd pleaser. There's something about two drummers going at it. It's a lot of fun." **David West**

Out Now: Gary's videocasts are available to purchase on garyhusband.com.

Key kit: *Pearl drums, Paiste cymbals, Promark sticks, Remo drumheads*



Images: Emily Dolan Davies

FANTASTIC FAILURE!

Emily Dolan Davies stresses the importance of turning a failure into a success – or at least a lesson learned

I want to share with you the most devastating day in my drumming life. I've never felt as heartbroken, hopeless or so close to hanging up my sticks. It was the turning point in my career, and one of the best days of my life.

I was 17 and got called by a producer to do a session in a professional studio in central London. I was so excited! All of my hard work (six years at the time) practicing, rehearsing, playing jam nights, gigs and taking lessons were finally paying off! This was my moment to elevate from 'wannabe' drummer to full-fledged professional.

By the time of the session, I had practised the songs, tuned my drums, set up my kit and with butterflies in my stomach, I sat down to record the first song. The record light flashed red, the click started and that's when... it all fell apart!

Suddenly, the drums felt completely alien to me, everything felt uncomfortable, like I'd never hit

a drum in my life, let alone played to a click, and you can forget about locking in with any other musicians! Second by second, I could feel all my dreams start to crumble around me.

The producer was so kind in trying to encourage me (whilst probably praying for some kind of miracle), but it ended with me not being able to record a single decent take of any of the songs and being asked to leave.

I was devastated! I had failed. Not just a bit, but spectacularly! And not in a private, safe space, but in a room full of strangers! I was humiliated.

The days that followed were spent battling myself and thinking about whether to give it all up or persevere.

As you can probably guess, I went with the latter. It was from that moment that I decided to use my failure as a blueprint of everything I needed to work on – and I made a pledge to myself that I'd never be in that position ever again.

If you fail at something, please know that you're not alone and that it might not be the end of your journey. Instead, see it as an opportunity, maybe a turning point, or even the making of you and your career!

www.EmilyDrums.com
www.EmilyDolanDavies.com

Rudiment Of The Month

The Flam Paradiddle

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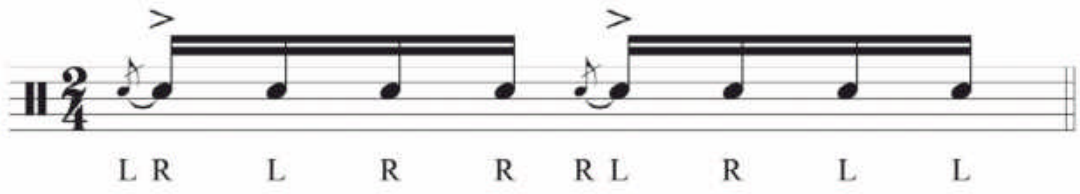
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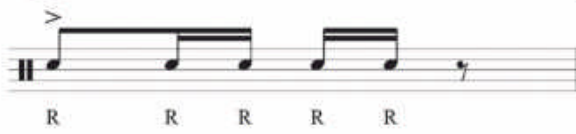
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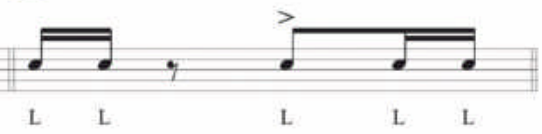
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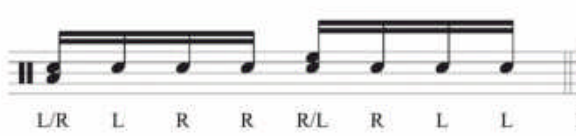
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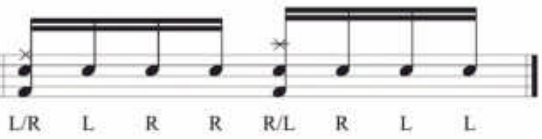

We're continuing our flam theme this issue with the Flam Paradiddle. This involves taking a single paradiddle with an accent on the first group of four in each hand and applying a flam to this note. In essence, the underlying paradiddle sticking is unchanged, but rather the opposite hand is adding a grace note before each of the accented notes (see Ex 1).

In Exs 2 and 3, you can see how this now requires the right and left hand, respectively, to play four consecutive notes – one of the reasons that flam figures can be excellent for developing one's technique is that doing this at speed can become a serious workout.

Finally, Exs 4 and 5 move the figure to the kit by placing the accented notes on either the toms (Ex 4) or the cymbals, along with the bass drum (Ex 5).

OFFBEATS

DEVITTO'S MEMOIRS

Liberty DeVitto's incredible career is the subject of a new autobiography from Hudson Music. DeVitto looks back at his childhood, early years at the kit and 30 years of multi-million record shifting with Billy Joel. DeVitto goes into glorious detail – and the Piano Man himself provides a foreword. hudsonmusic.com

WILK TO P&D

Brad Wilk is among the latest A-listers to join the Porter and Davies family. The Rage Against The Machine man is joined by Mike Bordin, Mat Hector, Kenny Aronoff, Tom Coll, Paul Faloon, Julian Zschäbitz, Joakim Lövmark, Alf Erik Fylkesnes – as well as Thies Steiner session drummers Meg Learmonth (Mura Masa), Jordan Tanner (Tash Sultana), Thierry Guerreiro (Iris) and Jonas Hermann (Jeremias). www.porteranddavies.co.uk

A PORCARO BOOK? IT'S ABOUT TIME

Writer Robyn Flans delves into the world of one of drumming's greatest-ever stars with new book *It's About Time, Jeff Porcaro: The Man and His Music*. The Hudson Music title charts Porcaro's life and career and features interviews with Jeff and insights from Bruce Springsteen, Ron Howard, Steve Lukather and David Gilmour. hudsonmusic.com

KENNY TO LP

Kenny Aronoff has switched to Latin Percussion: "I like to experiment and I use everything: cajon, udu drums, different-sized tambourines, bongos, congas... and I am honoured by LP's warm welcome". www.lpmusic.com

PDF ZOOMS IN

COVID may have put the blinkers on more than its share of events, but the Palace Drum Festival will not be halted! The educational event will take place via Zoom in February with Rob Brian, Ian Palmer, Pete Cater, Gary Allcock and Matt Green confirmed as expert tutors. Tickets start at £99. www.palacedrumclinic.com

CARLTON KING DRUM KIT

Vintage

CIRCA 1949

This exceptionally rare and fine example of British craftsmanship was rescued from a skip!

Writer: **Geoff Nicholls** | Images: **James Cumpsty**

Here is one of the most interesting kits we have featured in all the years of this column. It also shows UK craftsmanship of the highest order. And yet, as its owner, the multitalented drummer/singer/guitarist Will Keel-Stocker tells me, it was rescued from a skip, which signifies the sad disregard in which British-built drums of the immediate post-WWII period seem often to be held. Can you imagine canning a '40s or '50s Ludwig or Gretsch?!

"The kit was salvaged from a skip by a passing tradesman, who sold it to me on eBay," Will tells us. "It was pristinely preserved in original canvas bags and had calf heads fitted all round. I believe it survived so well with very little fade to the finish due to the majority of its life being spent stored in those canvas bags. With its fine alabaster-like swirl pattern, the white pearl wrap was a factory special – the usual offering being plain cellulose or one of several 'star' finishes.

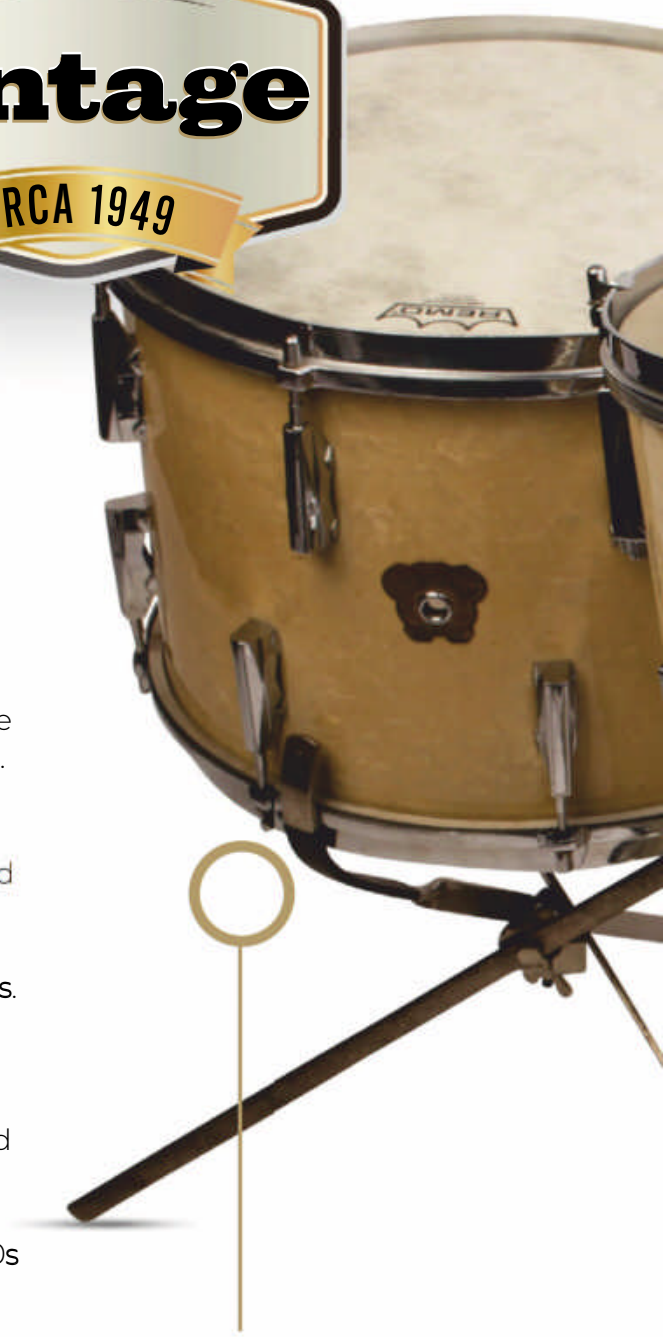
"Back in 1949, this was a top-of-the-range professional kit and would have cost £80, equivalent to around £2,850 today. It's unusual in having a 10"x6" tom. This was offered in the catalogue, but it is *very* rare to find one that has actually gone into production.

"The rest of the kit is typical of the period and features 'modern' bop sizes: 20"x15" bass drum, 12"x8" second tom, 14"x10" tom in a basket-cradle and 14"x5" wood shell snare. With its parallel mechanism and silk wires, the snare provides a dry crack with few overtones.

"Carlton literature described the shells as 'Retentor, heat-sealed shells', and they are beautifully constructed from ash ply with solid reinforcing rings. Both smaller toms feature single-flanged hoops with collar hooks, while the snare and the 14" tom have die-cast hoops. The bass drum is fitted with 'permanent spurs', consisting of paired retractable legs and a front anchor – all of which are fixed to the front bass drum hoop. They are machined from solid aluminium hex-bar and are most distinctive in design. As are the lugs, the design of which Carlton kept from the late '30s through to the mid-50s."

Will further reveals that, "The bass drum shell is signed on the inside, in pencil, 'Lapped and Assembled, E Holme, Sept 27/49'. 'Lapped' is the term given to the hand-stretching of animal hide over a flesh hoop to make drumheads, and these bass drumheads would have been made to measure. This incredible inscription allows us to date the kit precisely. I have never seen this on an English-production kit before, which suggests that the builder knew it was something special and that he was proud of his work.

"The kit plays beautifully, with a punchy, pleasing tone to the bass drum and extremely open and musical-sounding toms."



FLOOR TOM CRADLE

The largest tom is plonked on a cradle of the type that preceded the introduction of today's familiar floor tom legs.

1. Fancy Lug Castings
The late '30s saw the introduction of contemporary art deco influenced lug shapes, which held sway until the mid 50s.

2. British Super Shell
The world beating quality of the shell interiors is eye opening. It gives today's top shells more than a run for their money.

3. Parallel Action Throw-off Lever
Typical of European drums of the period, Carlton King snares boasted intricate snare lifting and lowering mechanisms.

● SINGLE-FLANGED HOOPS

The two top toms have single-flanged metal hoops with tension achieved via hook-over mini-collars.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH:
SIMON JOHN'S VINTAGE DRUM SHOW
www.vintagedrums.co.uk

NEED TO KNOW

CARLTON ON TOP
Carlton top-line endorsers in 1949 included Ray Ellington (of radio's 'The Goon Show' fame) who played a similar kit with staggered lugs, plus a monster 20"x20" floor tom.

JOHN E. DALLAS AND SONS
Established in 1875, Dallas of London, based at the Dallas Building, Clifton Street, EC2, made Carlton drums from 1935.

WILL KEEL-STOCKER
Will has several projects on the go with his superb collection of UK vintage drums. See some of them here: www.facebook.com/bevinboys/

● ALUMINIUM HEX BRACKETS

The bass drum has paired spurs and a most unusual anchor, all machined from solid hexagonal section aluminium.

"THE KIT PLAYS BEAUTIFULLY, WITH A PUNCHY, PLEASING TONE TO THE BASS DRUM AND EXTREMELY OPEN AND MUSICAL-SOUNDING TOMS."

OWNER, WILLIAM KEEL-STOCKER

FIRST LOOK

SHINY NEW DRUM STUFF TO LUST AFTER

1: Dave Grohl Icon Snare Drum
Price: £1,780
Crafted at the DW Custom Shop in California from 11 plies of North American Hard Rock maple, the 14"x6½" Icon Series snare features laser cut inlays, including depictions of the rock legend himself, Sound City and Studio 66. Unbelievably, Grohl's first-ever signature drum, there will only be 250 of these made.
www.dwdrums.com

2: Firefly Dynamic Tuning Device
Price: $19 (£14)
The Firefly Drum Key utilises a German-made unidirectional bearing designed to allow exceptional, precise and silent ratcheting. Engineered for lightning-fast drumhead changes, the key is machined from stainless steel to be long lasting and durable.
www.revodrum.com

3: Gruv Gear QUIVR Tour Dekade Edition Stick Bag
Price: $130 (£95)
With a stylish black and matte bronze exterior, the QUIVR features a quilted interior with plenty of internal pockets. Also wearable as a backpack, there's room for at least 34 pairs of sticks with a removable sleeve to hang on a floor tom.
www.gruvgear.com

4: Alesis Debut E-Kit
Price: £229.99
An incredibly affordable starter option from Alesis, the Debut E-Kit includes 6" mesh snare and tom pads, plus 10" cymbal pads for the crash, ride and hi-hats. The module features 10 kit presets with 120 individual sounds, and the pack even comes complete with a pair of sticks, headphones and a drum throne.
www.alesis.com

5: LP Tommy Lee 'Rock Star' Cowbell
Price: £81.90
The 8"-long cowbell features LP's high-impact Ridge Rider playing surface that helps dampen overtones and reinforces the mouth of the bell, making it perfect for the heaviest hitters. Finished in white with the Tommy Lee 'Rock Star Tattoo Graphic', which has been embedded directly into the metal surface.
www.lpmusic.com

6: Cympad Undertones
Price: £28-38
Using the same principle as Cympad's colourful foam alternative to cymbal felts, Undertones are designed to improve the sound of bass drums and floor toms while offering an extra layer of protection from unwanted drum and pedal movement. The large pads are for pedals and the round discs can be used under stands or floor toms.
www.cympad.com

7: CRX Air Series Cymbals
Price: $499.99 (£369)
The latest to hit the low-volume cymbal market is the CRX Air Series from TRX Cymbal Co. This limited-edition Sky-Blue pack includes 14" hi-hat, 20" ride, 18" crash-ride, 16" crash and bag.
www.trxcymbals.com

4

5

UNDERTONES
BY CYMPAD

6

BY CYMPAD
UNDERTONES
BY CYMPAD
UNDERTONES

AIR
AIR
AIR
CRX
CRX
CRX

7

FIRST LOOK

SHINY NEW DRUM STUFF TO LUST AFTER

1: Shawstix 'Chops'
Price: £5.95
A new range of affordable sticks from Shawstix. The Chops are Premium Hickory and finished matte black with non-marking tips. Currently available in 5A wood & nylon tip, 5B and X5A wood tip.
www.shawstix.co.uk

2: Code Signal Heads
Price: From £11.75
The new Signal series feature hardwearing 14mm single-ply heads giving a stunning mixture of depth, projection and attack. Snare and tom sizes range from 6" to 18" and 16" to 24" for the bass drum.
www.codedrumheads.co.uk

3: Laney DH80 e-Drum Monitor
Price: £219
The new DH80 from Laney is a compact solution for home practice with Bluetooth for wireless music streaming, hard-hitting low end and two-channel inputs – all in a compact 80-watt package.
www.laney.co.uk

4: British Drum Co. Merchandise
Price: From £4.99
BDC's new merch store features a host of awesome swag, such as Nicko McBrain Talisman and Icarus t-shirts, a selection of quirky key rings, lanyards and mugs.
www.britishdrumco.com

5. *Modern Hands Vol 2* by William Granville Taylor
Price: £15.99 (use 'Lockdown' discount code for a £3 saving!)
Suited to intermediate players and upwards, William Taylor's *Modern Hands Vol 2* is loaded with exercises and etudes to hone the technique, dexterity and reflexes.
www.willtaylordrums.co.uk

6: SJC Jay Weinberg Snare
Price: £1,799
SJC has teamed up with Slipknot's Jay Weinberg to craft this menacing snare drum. Outfitted with Jay's custom resin artwork, this shell features 48 plies of North American maple, 45-degree bearing edges, 2" vents, custom signature badges and flat-black hardware, plus a virtual meet and greet with the man himself!
www.sjcdrums.com

7: Evans Barney Beats Practice Pad
Price: £46
Based on the classic RealFeel practice pad, this special-edition 12" pad comes in red and features the iconic Barney Beats logo. The gummed rubber is slightly thicker than the standard pads providing a unique sound and feel that is more responsive.
www.daddario.com

8: Tama Starclassic Performer Maple/Birch Kit
Price: £1,399 (5-piece); £1,199 (4-piece)
The newest incarnation of the Performer line features 6mm tom and snare shells and 7mm bass drum shells, both with maple making up the inner 2 plies. Pre-configured as 4-piece and 5-piece shell packs, with matching snare drums or add-on toms available to order, the maple/birch comes in four stunning finishes.
www.tama.com

BRITISH
DRUM CO.

4

DRUM KEY
BOTTLE OPENER

MODERN HANDS VOL 2
BY WILLIAM GRANVILLE TAYLOR
EXERCISES & ETUDES

5

SJC
CUSTOM DRUMS

6

EVANS
REALFEEL

7

TAMA

8

Drumlines

Stu Warmington of the British Drum Co. returns to *Rhythm* with his entertaining and edifying column about marching percussion

Well, here we are once again with a new instalment of marching articles, and just like last time, we'll be traveling around the world interviewing seriously talented drummers who work with some incredible groups. We'll be bringing back popular features such as the Coffee Break Challenge where our guest interviewee pits you to challenge yourself either around your drum kit or on a drum pad with their chosen material.

During the oncoming months, we will cover a variety of groups, but one particular type are entertainment drumlines, and that's exactly where we start now.

The Walt Disney Company ® is famed for many things, including Micky Mouse and making dreams come true. One aspect of the company you may not be aware of, however, is the Disneyland Percussion Ensembles, and today we're talking to Danny Raymond, who has been with Disney for the last 30 years.

Disney Drumlines

Prior to all the drumline entertainment groups, roughly 25 years ago, marching percussion was a foundation and inspiration for a drum group comprising three custodial workers that decided to take a cleaning break, pull out their drumsticks and ram some cool beats on trash cans, bins and buckets. They became the Trash Can Trio.

The group was so well received, the entertainment department in the Florida park decided to provide a group there as well. In 1995, Da Jammitors was created and continue to share their drumming fun with Disneyland guests today.

The idea to feature an actual drumline as an entertainment offering began in 2010. With Halloween approaching, it was decided there should be a small roaming 'Zombie' music group. So began the Zombeatz! All the 'Dead Beatz' in the group had marching experience with groups like the Blue Devils, Phantom Regiment, Boston Crusadors, Madison Scouts, Infinity Indoor and more. They were so popular in fact that Disney was inspired to create the Green Army Drum Corps at the Walt Disney Studios, which won an award for top entertainment group among the theme parks in Florida.

"I've been very fortunate to be a Disney cast member for 30 years," explains Danny, "and I just celebrated 25 with the Jammitors. I help create and, on occasion, have produced all the groups I perform in (Jammitors, Zombeatz and Green Army Drum Corps). I have written and recorded percussion for groups and shows at the Walt Disney Company, and I serve as a casting associate for various percussion auditions."

At what age did you start drumming and how did you get into it?

"Since my dad, Danny Raymond Sr, was a marching drummer, instructor and judge, I guess you could say I was born into it! He started my journey with a pair of 3S marching sticks and showed me the basics, or rudiments. I'm pretty sure paradiddles was the first pattern learned. Lots of repeating and muscle memory helped me develop from an early age.

"By the time I was in elementary school, I at least had some ability of a few rudiments and started to read music. This was maybe around the third grade (age 9 or 10). My dad was heavily involved in the marching activity through drum and bugle corps, and his influence along with the marching activity played the biggest roll (pardon the pun!) in my foundation as a drummer."

Image: Courtesy of Danny Raymond

Image: Courtesy of Danny Raymond

Who is your biggest drumming influence?

"I'd have to say my dad for obvious reasons, however, one of the best gifts he gave me was his encouragement to study with other drummers and teachers. He wanted me to receive as much as I could to help me with my drumming.

"So, to that end, there are more people than I can actually name that have influenced and continue to influence me, be it marching, drum set, percussionists, etc. I will, however, name three specific drumlines that continue to influence and inspire. They are first and foremost: the 1969/1970 Blessed Sacrament Golden Knights, the 1975 Santa Clara Vanguard and the 1976 Garfield Cadets Drum and Bugle Corps. Recordings by way of either audio or video can be found by searching the web, and I encourage anyone interested to give a listen to these groups! In all actuality, I'm amazed and inspired by anyone who has taken this thing of marching percussion to demonstrations I never thought possible, be it drum corps, pipe bands, solo performers, etc. I see it as a celebration of what we all do, no matter the style and era."

What made you want to join the Walt Disney Company?

"My first visit to Disney World revealed there was more to the experience than just attractions. Yes, the attractions were a lot of fun, but then to my amazement, I saw not one, not two, but THREE marching music groups perform in one day at Epcot! I did start to wonder since I was involved in the marching activity, could this possibly become my job?

"It had been a goal of mine to have some kind of career that involved music and possibly drumming. Here was an opportunity to help put my goals in motion. I auditioned, and 30 years later, here I still am! Very, very grateful to say the least."

Which drummers/group would you most like to play with?

"There are a bunch of groups I would like to jam with, especially on drum set. Wide range here... The Who, Cheap Trick, Genesis... man, I can go on and on! I will say though that I'm very happy to have played with – and continue to drum with – my friends in the Jammitors, Zombeatz, Green Army Drum Corps and the drum corps I marched with (New York Skyliners). ▷

COFFEE BREAK CHALLENGE

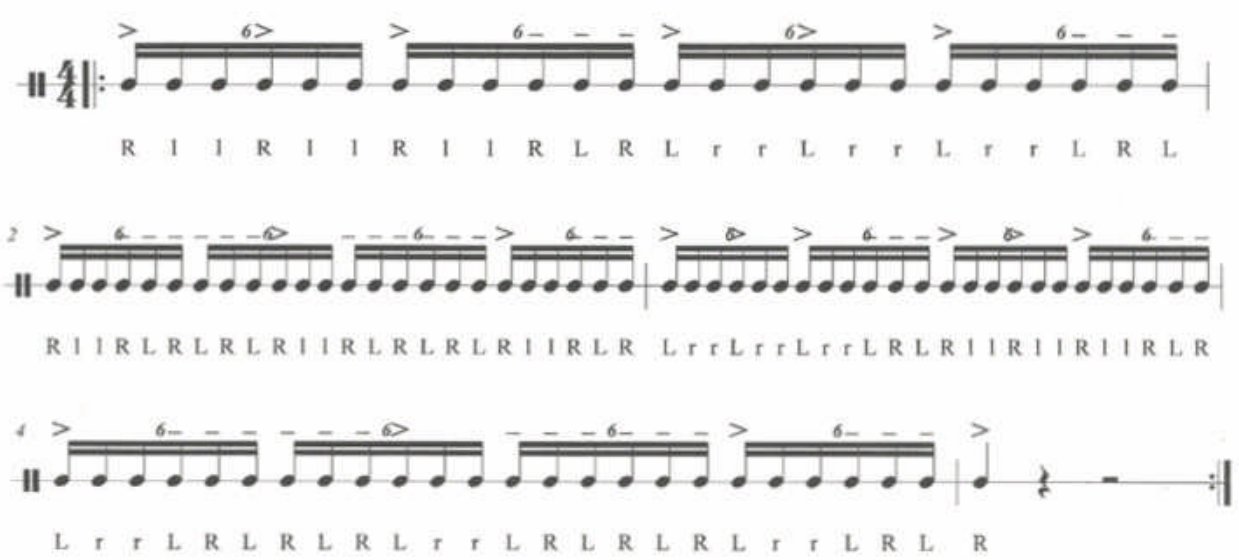
Singles and Doubles 2016

Please Note the Accents and Dashes. The Dash above a note indicates a "Tenuto" marking. These notes are played and felt a little louder than an unmarked note but not as loud as an accented note.

Image: Courtesy of Danny Raymond

▷ Any time I get to make music with others is a good thing!"

What is your proudest drumming moment to date?
"It really is impossible to name just one moment, I'm afraid. Let's just say it includes things like competitions, publishing, performing, teaching – and not in any particular order. I'm grateful for it all."

Your most embarrassing moment?
"Oh, I've had my share! Not being up on my reading or sight reading, dropping a stick in the middle of a performance comes to mind. I'm sure there's more! Let's move on!!"

What has been your most memorable gig and why?
"Once again, I'm really grateful for it all, but if I have to choose one, it's probably Da Jammitors. I've had a lot to say and play with the group, and what helps me feel proud is our longevity. We've continued to evolve while maintaining an integrity and connection to the gig and to our audience. To know that I've been integral to the group's success for so long, it's impossible not to be incredibly proud."

How has COVID-19 affected your job this year?
"I was furloughed for a period of three months. Steps have been taken to keep our guests and cast members as safe as possible, and when guidelines allowed, I was able to be recalled. Upon return to work, those who were fortunate to be recalled are very grateful, and safety guidelines are an integral part of our daily operations."

What is the most rewarding part of your job?
"Without a doubt, I get to do what I've enjoyed since being a little kid for a living. That includes everything from performing, teaching, writing, judging and, even as a fan, watching and experiencing this drumming thing myself!"

Do you have any advice or a quote you'd like to share with us?
"I wrote and taught a drum corps from North Carolina, Carolina Gold, back in 2005 and 2006. Prior to a competition, our equipment truck hadn't arrived for rehearsal, so the line made do with wooden park and grandstand benches. Well, let me tell you, playing on planks of wood or even a wooden table top (which was a practice tool for many drum and bugle corps drumlines way back when) exposed many drumming indiscretions! I was able to address these indiscretions by announcing to the line, 'Da Wood Don't Lie!' Playing on a plank of wood produces a clarity of sound that can be both an ear and eye opener with your drumming. I guess it would be the sonic quality of the wood that allows for such clarity. So, the next time you find yourself drumming on a wooden surface and you hear or discover interesting things about your playing, remember... 'Da Wood Don't Lie!'"

Image: Courtesy of Danny Raymond

Next Issue: Chicago Bears Drumline

Disneyland Percussion Ensemble Kit:
A majority of the drums and harnesses at Disney are Pearl USA. Danny's drum is a Pearl FFX Championship Marching Snare in Emerald Mist. For themed performances, they use a On2 Percussion slip covering. His marching sticks of choice are Vic Firth SRH Ralph Hardimon model.

danny.raymond
dannydrum6
www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7A25D55713DD20CC

WIN!

One of five award-winning Aston Element microphones

It's the mic everyone is talking about. Element combines the best of Dynamic, Condenser and Ribbon technology in a sleek, near-indestructible chassis. Sound on Sound called it "A breath of fresh air", Music Tech "A game changer". It's already scooped a whole bunch of awards.

Element comes supplied with FREE proprietary pop shield and shock mount - everything you need to start making world-class recordings - and a free 10 year warranty to ensure long-term professional performance.

We've hooked up with Aston to offer FIVE of these game-changing mics in our free-to-enter competition...

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What is the name of Element's proprietary capsule technology?

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astonmics.com email your answer to: **info@beatsnetwork.co.uk**

Terms & Conditions

1. Entrants must be aged 18 or over. 2 Entries close 11.59pm, 31st March 2021 GMT. 3. Prize is as stated and is non-transferable and non-refundable. 4. There is no cash alternative. 5. Only one entry per person. 6. Winners will be notified by email 14 days after the competition closes.

For full terms and conditions, email info@beatsnetwork.co.uk

Promoter: Beats Network Limited, 34 Westway, Caterham, Surrey CR3 5TP

GRETSCH

Bobby Orr

A TRUE BRIT DRUM HERO REMEMBERED, IN HIS OWN WORDS

After the show, Benny [Goodman] came up smiling and said Gene [Krupa] never played it like that. Now, I didn't know how to take that. He was maybe expecting the toms."

In just the few words above, spoken to *Rhythm* in 2015, you can get a real feel for the calibre of both the drummer and the man that was the late, great Bobby Orr.

Bobby, who passed away aged 91 last March, had the skills to become the only British drummer to land the coveted Goodman gig, but also the humility to never assume a compliment, even of his own sublime playing.

Born in Cambuslang, Scotland on 15 August 1928, Bobby's drummer father passed on the musical bug, although it was trumpet that the youngster began to show more of an interest in than drums.

"He had a band playing local dances," Bobby said of his father in an interview conducted by *Rhythm* at his 85th birthday party. "If he had a double date, he would send me out with two accordion players, playing jigs and reels, for half a crown: 2s/6d. I was eight or nine, in short pants.

"Later, I'd get dressed up with the kilt and get a tram into Glasgow to go with the (pipe) band. But around 17, I was more into learning jazz on the trumpet – Louis Armstrong and Harry James. So, as soon as we finished, I would rush home and pick up the trumpet to do a little gig."

Bobby left school to become a carpenter before joining the Bert Tobias band at the Locarno, Glasgow in 1948 – again, on trumpet – before finally moving full-time on to drums in a big band with Andy White. From there, Bobby soon established himself as not just a tidy pipe band drummer with impeccable attention to rudiments and precision, but also a major player on the session scene, something that required something of a ruthless streak.

"This was the early '60s. I toured with Tommy Steele and was making a name as a session drummer. You go where the money is. You get offered a gig, and you can't do it because you're doing a show or something. You have to move on, something else comes up. The music business was always a bit of a rat race!"

While Bobby certainly had the skills to acquire all manner of pop and rock session work, it was jazz where his heart lay: "I was never into talking about rock 'n' roll and straight eighths, I just played... I was never prominent as a pop drummer, it was too simple to me. I was more into jazz, small groups, with Ronnie [Scott], Tubby Hayes and Jimmy Deuchar. But I did big band as well. Carmen McRae came over and we toured with her in Ronnie's big band. I left that band and went into studio work – the good money was often made in TV."

"I WAS NEVER INTO TALKING ABOUT ROCK 'N' ROLL AND STRAIGHT EIGHTHS, I JUST PLAYED..."

When the '70s rolled around, here came that aforementioned stint with the great Benny Goodman – and Bobby certainly made his mark, in part thanks to an undeniably cool trick, albeit one his dentist probably wouldn't have enjoyed seeing.

"We had a week's rehearsal at a big pub in Acton. He would rehearse the horns, but he never bothered much with the rhythm section. I used to fool about with a pencil on my teeth, playing 'The Flight Of The Bumblebee'. That got a laugh, and eventually we went away on tour. In Stockholm, in the interval, Benny sent for me. I thought, oh no! But Benny said, that thing with your teeth, put it into the second half before 'Sing, Sing, Sing'. So I did Mozart's 'Turkish March' and brought the house down."

Goodman was far from the only A-list name that Bobby played with. In fact, he appeared on stage and record with a treasure trove of greats, including Sammy Davis Jr and Bing Crosby.

Discussing the latter, Bobby explained: "I was the last drummer to record with him, his last gig, a broadcast ▷

from Maida Vale, with the BBC Radio Orchestra with the Gordon Rose band (11 October 1977). Two days later, he went over to Spain to play golf and he died over there (14 October 1977).

"I remember one other session we did, and in the interval, I went to the toilet and Bing walks in. And we were standing there together, and I said, 'Bing, I have to tell you, my sister's little girl told me this story, I hope you understand, it's in Scot's lingo: "What's the difference between Bing Crosby and Walt Disney? Bing sings and Walt dis'nee"'. He laughed his head off. He got it; he was great."

We mentioned at the top of this piece that not only was Bobby a great drummer, but also a fine man. That much is again demonstrated in his readiness at that 85th birthday chat to tip his hat to his own inspirations.

"Phil Seamen, Jack Parnell, Basil Kirchin and Tony Crombie, another great drummer. They were all on the scene before me," he said, before adding some of his favourite players from across the

Image: Brian O'Connor/Getty Images

TRIBUTES

RALPH SALMINS

"For me, Bobby Orr, Phil Seamen and Tony Kinsey were the triumvirate of heavyweight jazz drummers. They were real hotshots doing amazing work and playing fantastic gigs. Early on in my career, I was lucky enough to work with two incredible jazz stalwarts, pianist Brian Dee and double-bassist Len Skeat, and I learnt so much about Bobby from those guys, because the three of them had played together.

"The first time I got to meet Bobby myself was when I was booked to play percussion with the Andy Ross band on one of the BBC's original *Come Dancing* shows. Bobby was playing drums. I was barely out of college, but he was so kind and supportive of me as a young musician, and I'll never forget that. He really was a wonderful guy, a true gentleman and a great jazz drummer with beautiful technique. For me, he was a real inspiration – a model man and a fierce musician."

CLEM CATTINI

"I loved the way that Bobby played – I could sit and listen to him for hours. Along with Kenny Clare, Ronnie Verrell and Ronnie Stephenson, he really was one of the finest big band drummers this country ever produced, and a really important part of our musical history.

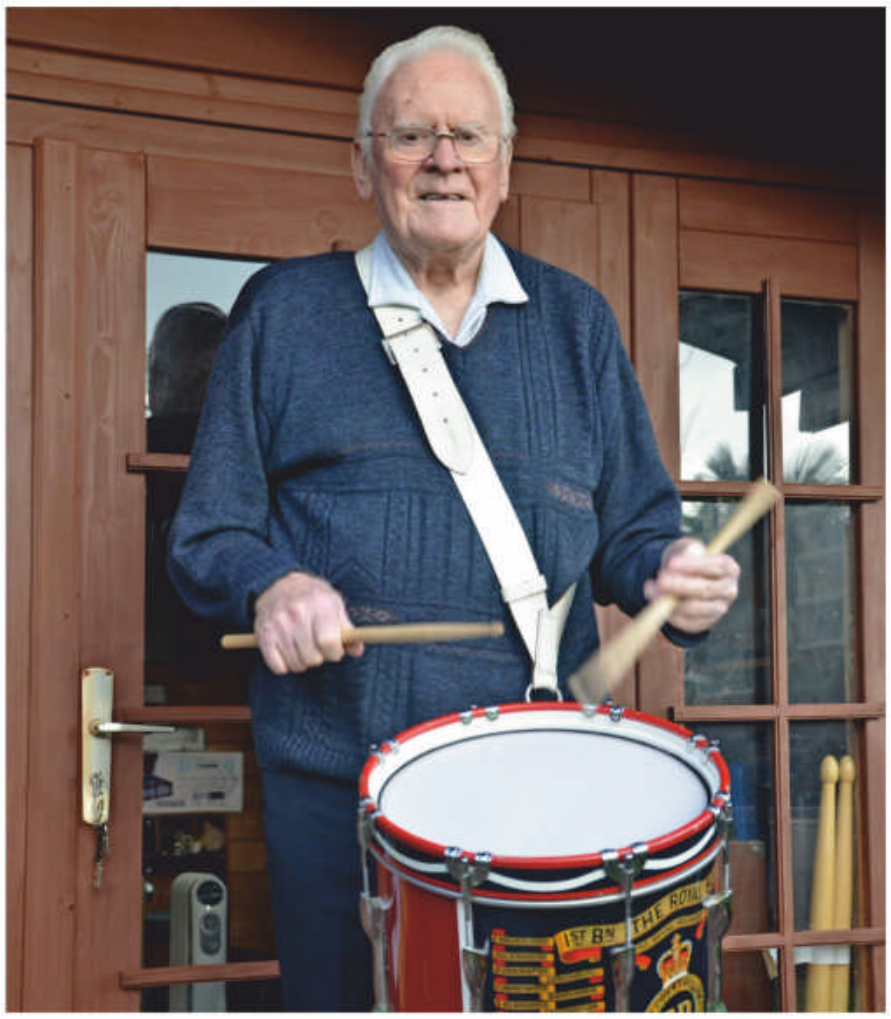
"Bobby had such great feel and a rudimental discipline that came from studying with Scottish pipe drum champion Alex Duthart. I'm not sure how many people know

this, but Bobby was actually a trumpet player originally – until he damaged his lip. And I think that sympathetic approach in his playing in those big band situations came from that unique understanding of the brass section.

"Some of the jazz guys would look down on drummers like me – the rock 'n' rollers of the time – as if we were pariahs, but Bobby was always so helpful, kind and encouraging. I will never forget the wonderful party that Chris Wright, of the DrumWright shop in Reading, organised for his 80th birthday celebrations. Of course, Bobby treated us all to his party piece of playing his teeth with a pencil – just amazing!"

CHRIS WRIGHT

"I first came across Bobby's name in *Melody Maker* in the early '60s, but it was more than 30 years before we first met at a Jim Chapin masterclass. Over the ensuing years, we became good friends. At visits to his home, out would come the practice pad, followed by a dazzling display of speed and agility. Then I



Near left: Bobby on marching drum, photo courtesy of Geoff Nicholls.
Bottom left: 80th birthday celebrations! (l–r: Eric Delaney, Bob Henrit, Clem Cattini, Bobby Orr, Pete Cater, Alan Grahame and John Marshall)

would be given an exercise to try and master by our next meeting!

"Bobby's standing as a world-class drummer was brought home to me in conversation 20 years ago with the late Bob Zildjian. Bob recalled Benny Goodman – by many accounts, a hard taskmaster – enthusing about 'the great Scots' drummer' he had recruited into his orchestra for a tour of Europe in 1970. Yet Bobby wore his stature lightly. At a surprise 80th birthday lunch I had organised for him, he was reunited with old friends Eric Delaney, Clem Cattini, Bob Henrit, John Marshall, Pete Cater and Alan Grahame. He was overwhelmed that anyone should have done this for him, and it was both a joyous and moving occasion.

"Since his passing, I have been in touch with many drummers. The consistent threads running through email exchanges have been his prowess as a drummer and his kindness and support for aspiring young players. Bobby's legacy will endure not only through the music he recorded, but also in the playing of some of today's finest drummers whose skills he helped hone and whose aspirations he nurtured. We will miss him."

BOB HENRIT

"It was my father who first introduced me to Bobby Orr – he was a fan of his trumpet playing in Basil Kirchin's band. Like Bobby, he came from Scotland and also left Caledonia for the bright lights of London. Just at the time I was swapping my washboard for a 'bitsa' drum kit, Bobby developed a problem with his embouchure and, undaunted, he switched from trumpet to drums.

"He was very employable, because the experience of playing trumpet gave him reading abilities on the drums that not many players had. And he swung like crazy! It was actually Bobby's dad, a drum major himself, who'd had a big hand in him taking up the drums at a ridiculously young age.

"Of course, like everybody who'd ever witnessed it – including Benny Goodman – I was entranced with Bobby's party trick of playing a complicated orchestral tune on a pencil held against his teeth. One thing was for sure, whatever he played, Bobby made it swing!"

JOHN MARSHALL

"I hold Bobby in the highest esteem, both as a player and a person. He came from that exceptional generation of musicians who were such an inspiration – a master player and a gentleman."

PETE CATER

"Even though Bobby was very much at the vanguard of the modern British jazz scene, he was also equally at home playing with more mainstream and traditional bands. He was a powerful and swinging player, with a strong rudimental background, but he also had great touch and sound, and a great deal of finesse and delicacy. I always marvelled at his broad dynamic range and how he could go from a whisper to a roar – always making the other sound better as a result. Quite simply, he was an outstanding musician in a golden era of British music, and right up until the end of his life, he was always focussed on maintaining the standards of his playing – a true mark of greatness.

"I remember Bobby and Eric Delaney would come and see me play when I was first leading a big band, and the fact that these drummers – that I had grown up admiring – were taking the trouble to support what younger musicians were trying to do was extraordinary to me and meant a great deal. Bobby was also instrumental in me getting the 1997 tour of Japan with the Glenn Miller Orchestra UK – one of the greatest performing experiences of my life – and to have had that respect from him makes me very proud. Bobby may be gone, but he continues to inspire me and be a great source of positivity."

STEVE WHITE

"Bobby Orr was one of the true talents of British drumming and will be remembered for his technique, his versatility, his impeccable jazz swing, his genuine approachability and his dedication to drumming. Every note and beat had a place, every roll and paradiddle a purpose. I can only imagine what it must have been like to see Bobby driving the Tubby Hayes or Joe Harriot band in full open fifth gear!"

Jim Toscano

DRUM STUDIO TECH

Rhythm's comprehensive guide to creating your own drum studio and online setup

Words: Jim Toscano Images: **Ryan Billings Photography, Michael Ellison & Jim Toscano**

In this new normal that we are living in, connecting with video is commonplace for most everyone, including my dear old mom. We are having holidays on Zoom and the kids are all learning in a virtual video classroom. Using video platforms to fulfill our need to connect will have to do for the foreseeable future. No one really knows how long we will be in this situation – it is quite uncertain, especially for musicians.

But if you ask me, thank goodness we do have this technology! We must keep a positive outlook and embrace the technology to keep moving forward. It's all about connecting, community and this unique family that we call drummers, coming together and lifting one another up.

We are already living in a tech-driven society, and technology changes at a rate that is nearly impossible to keep up with. When COVID-19 hit and the first lockdown began, it levelled the playing field for just about every musician – from the everyday drummer to the working pro. Suddenly, we all were forced to evaluate and essentially reinvent the way that we work.

I hope to shed some light and provide a compass for you to use to navigate through the workflows and setups that can help you reach your goals in this new normal. My advice is to not wait any longer. The time is *now*. The water may look a little murky at the start, but you will emerge at the other side more confident and ready for action.

I consider my studio to be multidimensional, and thus I have broken this tech lesson into four basic categories: audio, video, computer/internet and online platforms.

“...JUST TURN ON YOUR CAMERA AND START. THIS WAY, YOU GET THE EXPERIENCE, YOU GET OVER THE FEAR AND YOU LEARN VERY QUICKLY HOW THINGS WORK.”

I have listed products throughout that I use, but there are many great products out there that suit a wide range of budgets!

▷ But before we get into it all, I would like you to ask yourself the following questions:

WHAT IS MY GOAL?

Many people feel that they *have* to do something, but they aren't quite sure what it is at first. So, Step 1: Clearly define your goal. What do you want to accomplish? What are your strengths? Remember that the goal can (and probably will) evolve over time, but we must first prioritise to maximise our results.

WHAT IS MY BUDGET?

You must decide how much you can afford to get your setup off the ground. Remember, you can get your studio up and running without spending a small fortune. But it is up to you to define what is reasonable and affordable – and then don't spend above your means. You can start small and add one piece at a time as needed and when resources become available. It ***is*** possible to get some very good results from a small and affordable setup.

Some good starting points I advise my clients to begin with include making an inventory of your current setup (computer, audio/mixer equipment, mics and instruments/kits, software); deciding what equipment you would like to have (instruments, hardware/software, camera/recording equipment) and the type of workflows you plan on using (livestreams, podcasts, video lessons); assessing the physical space for your studio; and, most importantly, deciding on your budget. This will provide some insight into the resources you have available and the areas where you may have to invest!

Now let's get to some of the good stuff: The Gear! Most of us get excited about new gear, whether it be drum gear or tech gear or a new coffee pot. But this is where you start to get a feel for what is out there, what your needs are and what works with your budget.

Video

SOURCES AND CAMERAS

USB Webcams
Logitech C920, Logitech Brio

Hybrid Cameras (HDMI/USB)
Zoom Q2n

HDMI Cameras/Consumer Sport Cameras *GoPro*

DSLR
A digital single-lens reflex camera (digital SLR or DSLR) is a digital camera that combines the optics and the mechanisms of a single-lens reflex camera with a digital imaging sensor. This device does not connect via USB and will need a capture device or software.
Canon Rebel

Mirrorless Cameras
A digital camera that accepts different lenses but does not use a mirror to reflect the image into the viewfinder. Also called a 'mirrorless interchangeable-lens camera' (MILC), 'hybrid camera' and 'compact system camera' (CSC). The body is thinner than a DSLR because there is no mechanical mirror. This device does not connect via USB and will need a capture device or software.
Sony A6100

Capture Devices These little gizmos can convert cameras that output HDMI into USB webcams or are USB capture devices that convert an HDMI signal to USB.
Magewell Capture Plus, Elgato Cam Link, Idealforce HDMI

Software Capture I do not generally recommend this option as many 'capture utility' apps are glitchy and unreliable. I always recommend a piece of hardware over software whenever possible. Hardware capture components also do not drain your computer's CPU.

Video Switchers Think of these as a mixer for your video cameras.

HDMI A/B Style Switchers *IOGEAR*

HDMI Production Switchers
Blackmagic ATEM Mini, ATEM Mini Pro and Mini ISO, Roland V-1HD*

* The ATEM Mini Pro and ATEM Mini Pro ISO are great options as they are affordable and provide all of the switching capability while eliminating the need for a separate capture device. They also remove the need for a separate video recorder as both of these models output a recordable feed to an external hard drive. Blackmagic also provides a very powerful production control software included with these switchers.

Video Recorders External recording devices that allow you to record high-definition video.

SSD Recording External recorders such as the *Blackmagic HyperDeck Shuttle* and the *Blackmagic Video Assist*, which is a 4k monitor that records to an SSD card.

SD Cards These cards are loaded directly into the camera, including micro SD.

Software You can record directly to a program like QuickTime, but there are limitations and inherently some latency. I would recommend this for quick videos for students or colleagues, but not for presentation-quality material.

Useful Terminology

CAPTURE DEVICE – A video capture device is a piece of hardware that lets you transfer audio and video from a VCR, camcorder or other devices to your computer so it can be stored on a hard drive, whether for editing or just general archival purposes.

VIDEO MIXER OR SWITCHER – A video switcher is a hardware device used to switch or choose between different audio or video sources. Video switchers are mostly used in film and video production environments like production trucks and television studios, and are also known as production switchers, video mixers or vision mixers.

CLASS COMPLIANT USB – Most USB audio and MIDI computer peripherals are Class Compliant USB devices. This means that to communicate with the computer, they use drivers that are built right into the host computer's operating system. These drivers are written by Microsoft (PCs) or Apple (Macs) and come pre-installed on all computers.

HDMI (High-Definition Multimedia Interface) – This is a proprietary audio/video interface for transmitting uncompressed video data and compressed or uncompressed digital audio data from an HDMI-compliant device, such as an HDMI camera.

SDI (Serial Digital Interface) – This is a family of digital video interfaces first standardised by SMPTE (the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers) in 1989.

VOIP APP – A software application installed on a computer or smartphone that lets you make and receive telephone calls. Chances are you've already used one before. Popular personal VoIP apps include Zoom, Skype, FaceTime and WhatsApp.

"DON'T GET **TOO HUNG UP ON THE END GOAL** – LET THE PROCESS BE AN ADVENTURE THAT **KEEPS YOU LEARNING SOMETHING NEW** – AND **DON'T LET IT GET YOU DOWN WHEN THINGS GO WRONG.**"

Audio

Let's get our sound on, people. This is what separates us from others in the video lessons market. We come at you with great quality audio as well as great video. We must sound good to our clients or they are not coming back.

AUDIO SOURCES

USB Microphones *Blue Yeti*

XLR Microphones
Audix DP7 drum pack

Hybrid Modules and Electronic Drums
Yamaha EAD10

INTERFACES/MIXERS

USB Audio Interfaces *Focusrite 18i20*

USB Mixers *Yamaha MG12XU*

Hybrid Mixing Desk/Interfaces
Zoom L8, L12, L20

DAW *Logic Pro, Cubase, Pro Tools*

Using Audio Interfaces: Mac vs PC
Using an audio interface gives you the flexibility of using any microphone you choose or more that one mic for more audio options. You can start with a two-channel interface or work your way up to eight channels and beyond. If you are a Windows user, there is a specific set of circumstances if you want to bring multichannel audio into the VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) world of programs, including Skype, Zoom, Teams, Meets, Messenger etc.

Most multichannel interfaces (up to eight channels) will be seen on a Mac without any specialised preparation. But not to worry if you are on a Windows machine, and especially if you are using a Focusrite interface, there are some easy solutions that work!

If you are using Zoom, I recommend creating a Zoom account and installing the Zoom Client for Meetings desktop application from the Zoom website, as the web client has limited features.

If you are using a one or two-channel interface, you will have no problem as Windows will see both channels for use on Zoom or Skype. You can follow the directions on Focusrite's website .

When it comes to multichannel (three or more) audio inputs, we need a different routing solution. Focusrite has a detailed explanation with diagrams on their website.

Essentially, in the Windows world, you will see that Zoom or Skype will only see inputs 1 and 2 on a multichannel interface. Within Focusrite's monitoring software, Focusrite Control, you can send all of your inputs (with the exception of input channel 1) to an output. (Remember, if you are using condenser mics: turn on phantom power to those channels). You then take a ¼" TRS cable from an output, such as channel 3, and plug it into input 1 on the interface, thus sending a sum of all of your inputs to input 1 of your interface.

This is the same principle as using an external mixer and physically plugging it in to your interface. This will work too, if you want to expand your outputs with another eight channel preamp or more with, perhaps, a Focusrite Octopre.

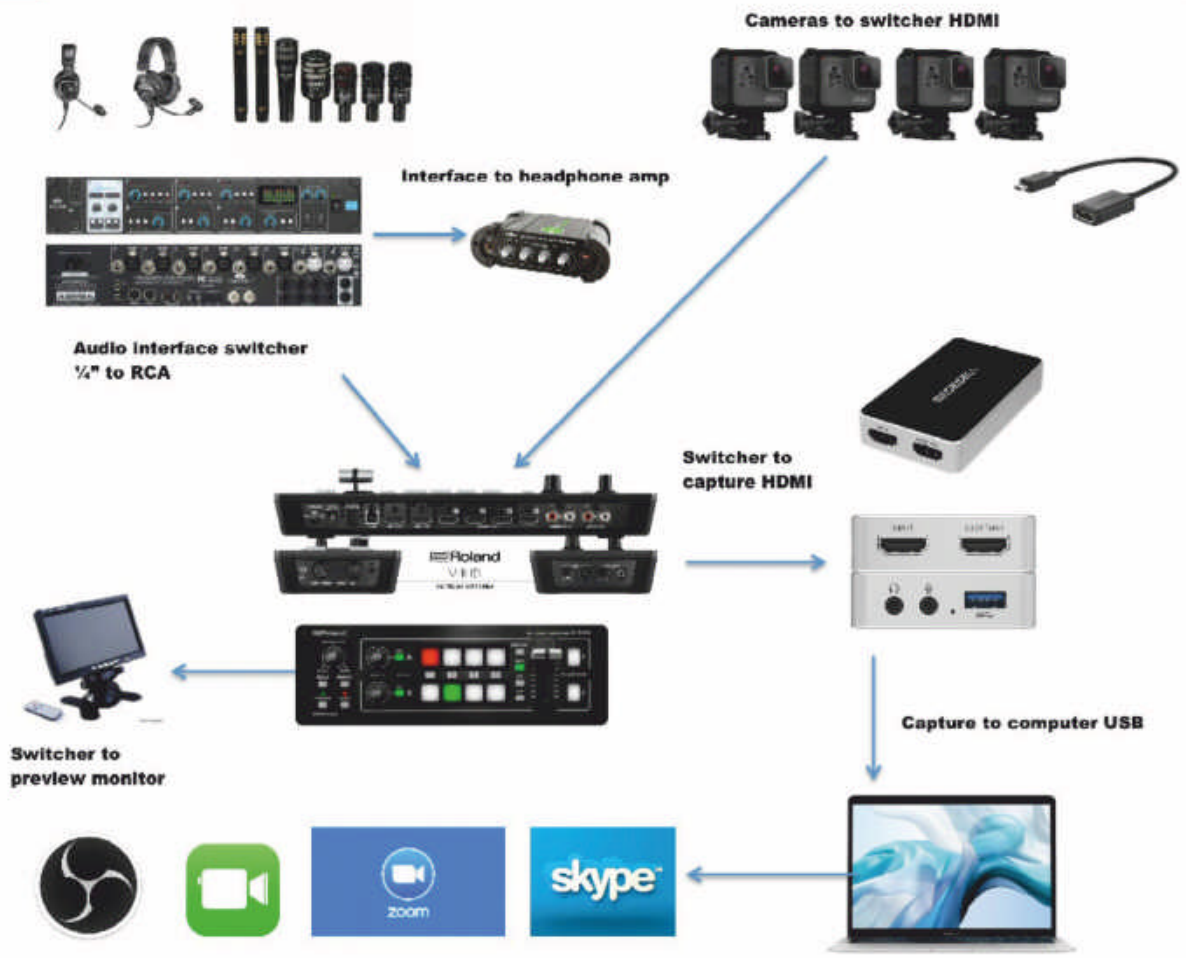
Setups

Now let's put some of these items together into practical setups. The following information should give you an understanding of what these setups look like and what will suit your particular needs.

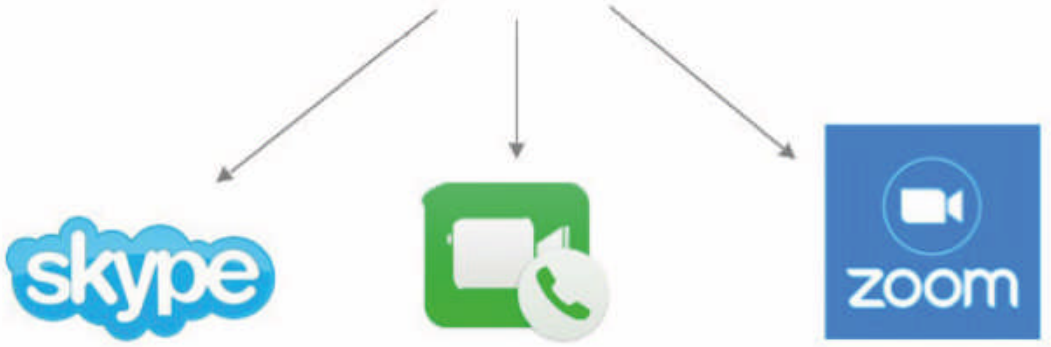
The various workflows that you could consider with the following setups would be one-to-one online lessons, group lessons, a master class setting or clinic, livestreaming and making video and audio recordings.

Whether you are looking to teach online, video conference or livestream, there are many ways to do this with little or no budget.

Let's examine the different setups there are to choose from and the pros and cons of each.



BUILT-IN WEBCAM AND MIC



PROS: We don't need any extra video or audio gear, and the picture and audio are usually in sync since they are coming from the same device.

CONS: It is very limiting when it comes to positioning the camera since it is attached to the computer, and there is no mixing capability. The audio is not that clear and what the webcam hears is what you will hear.

BEST PRACTICE INTERNET

SPEED

For online lessons, take a moment right now and go to speedtest.net. Click 'go' and see what the results are. If your internet speed is very low for upload and download speeds, all of this great tech that we are looking to implement will not be very effective. It all begins with the connection. I understand that good internet is not available everywhere, however, as a general guideline, get the best and fastest speed available for your area and for your budget.

CONNECTION

When possible, connect to your router with an ethernet cable. A wired connection will be much more stable and will provide better speed and connection.

MINIMISE TO MAXIMISE

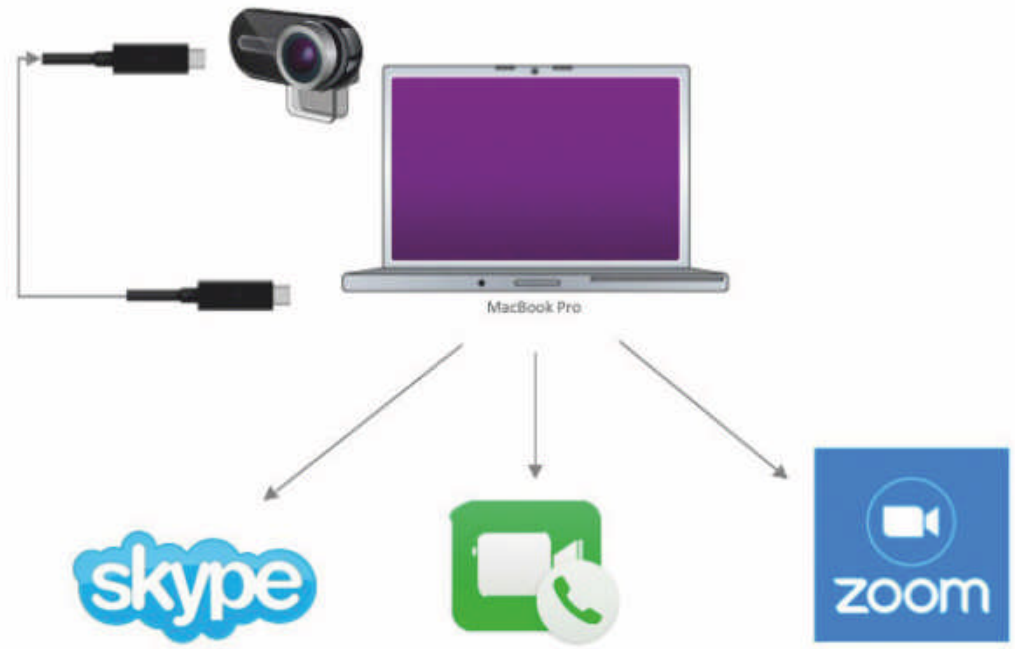
Keep other connected devices to a minimum while teaching online or livestreaming. Having a household of devices all connected to WiFi will greatly reduce the bandwidth left for your workflow.

Setups

USB WEBCAM AND USB MIC

PROS: You can position the camera anywhere you like, provided you have a mount and a long enough cable. The USB mics often have various sound profiles, so you can find a mic setting that works for your room.

CONS: Most webcams have set parameters and typically do not have settings for colour, light, FPS, etc. USB mics limit you to one source and one sound profile for everything, including your voice and instruments.



QUICK TIPS:

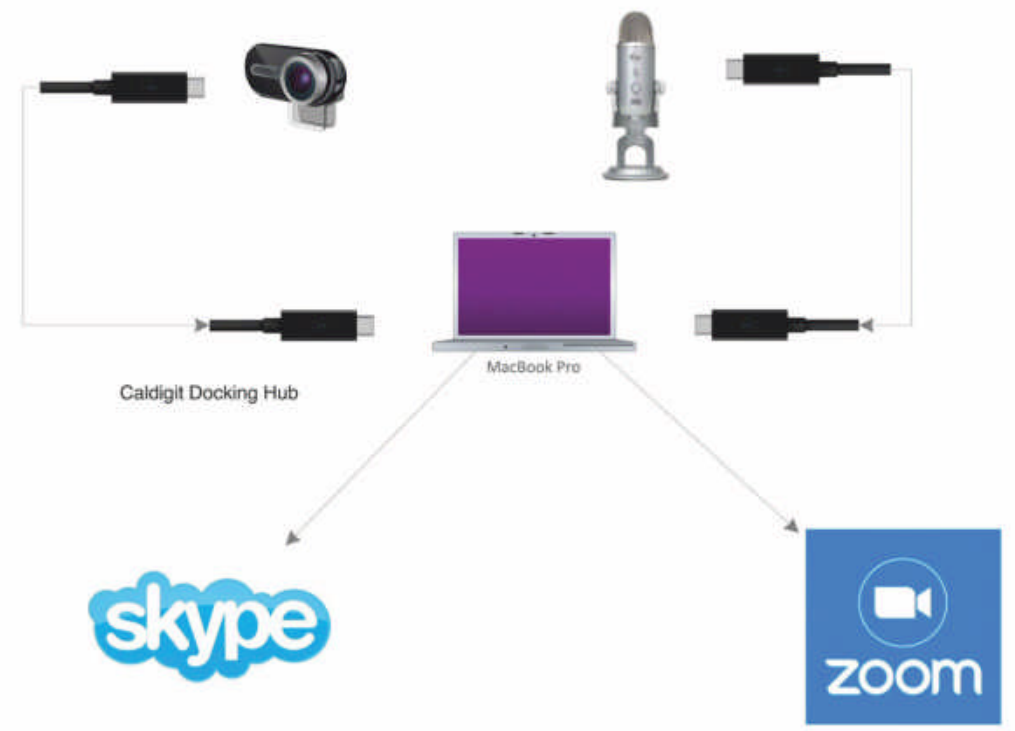
If you are livestreaming or teaching online, make sure that you keep all programs that are not in use closed and to a minimum. Only run what is necessary for the given task – this will conserve your computer's CPU usage.

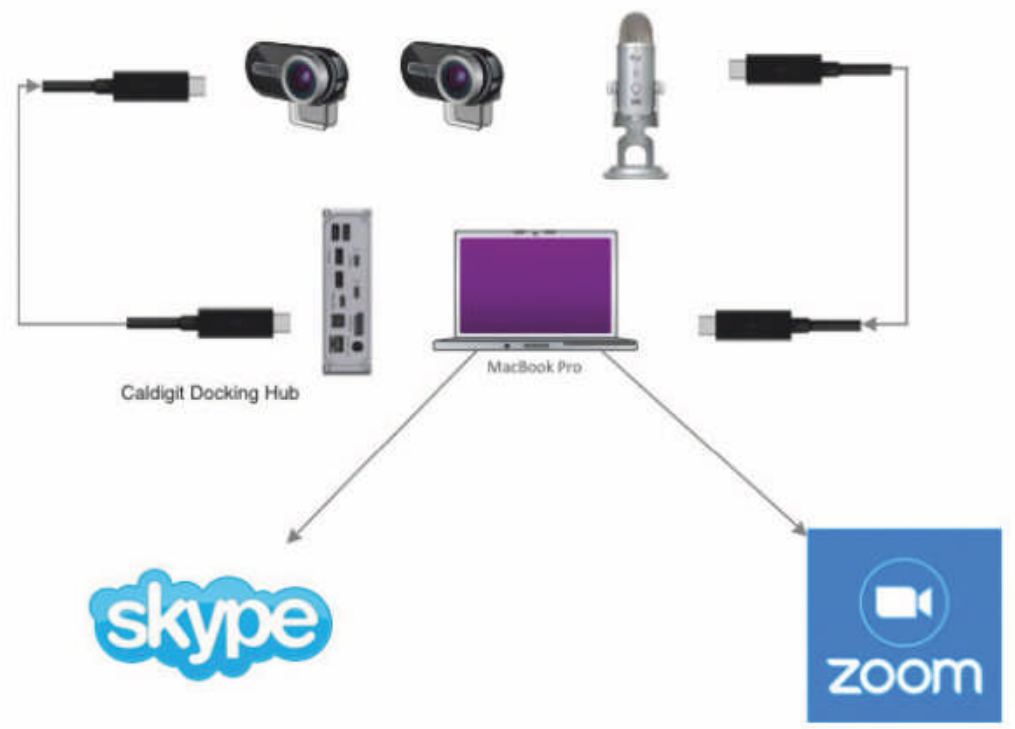
Do a fresh reboot before you go live. This will close out programs that may be running in the background and allow you to get the most out of your computer's processing power.

In summary, my biggest piece of advice is to jump in. Don't wait! Get something that is within your budget and get started hooking it up. Don't just stand around fearing the technology, because it doesn't wait for you. The longer you wait, the more the technology changes and you never seem to catch up.

Lastly, enjoy the process! Don't get too hung up on the end goal – let the process be an adventure that keeps you learning something new – and don't let it get you down when things go wrong. Occasionally, you wind up going down a rabbit hole for hours troubleshooting something just to find that a cable wasn't plugged in all the way. Know that when you're dependent upon software and technology, sometimes things stop working with no explanation except to turn it off and turn it back on.

My original inspiration for teaching online and recording lessons came from my teacher, mentor and friend Dom Famularo. I started small and kept going, perfecting learning, making mistakes – and I still do... every day.



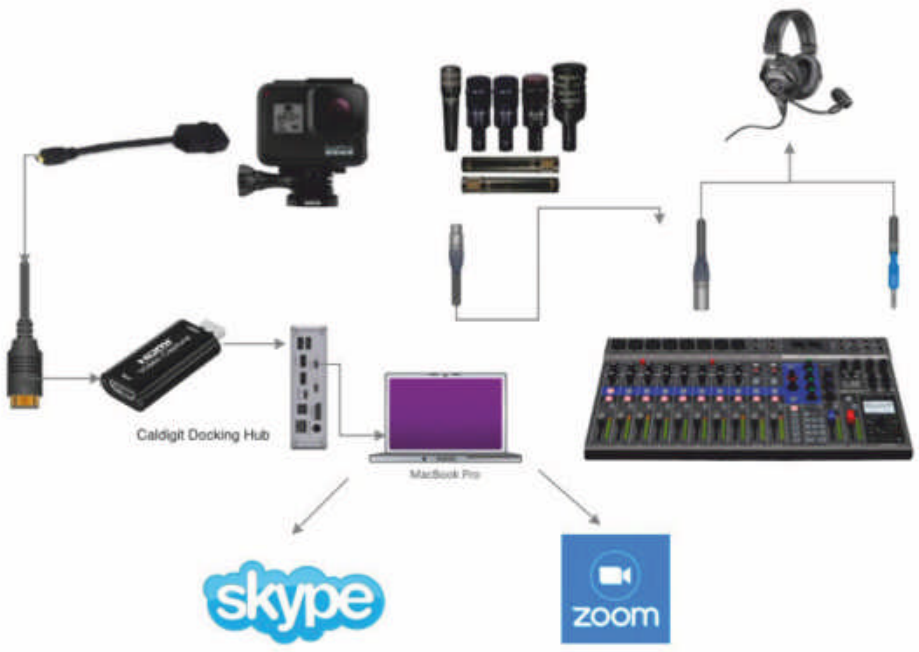


USB MIXERS WITH HYBRID CAMERAS

PROS: Most USB mixers send a stereo signal over USB that can be used for online lessons and livestreaming. The hybrid camera, such as the Zoom Q2n, can work as a webcam but will give you a nicer picture than your average webcam.

CONS: USB mixers often are limited in what they can do in a recording environment. Hybrid cameras will work well, but if you are going to use more than one, you will lose connection when switching between cameras without a proper switcher.

HYBRID USB MIXING DESKS/INTERFACES AND HDMI CAMERAS



PROS: This type of mixer has anywhere from 2 tracks up to 24 and sends a stereo signal out over USB. You can record the individual tracks if you set it up in your DAW correctly. This option combines the best of both worlds. HDMI cameras will look much better than webcams and have more settings available to you.

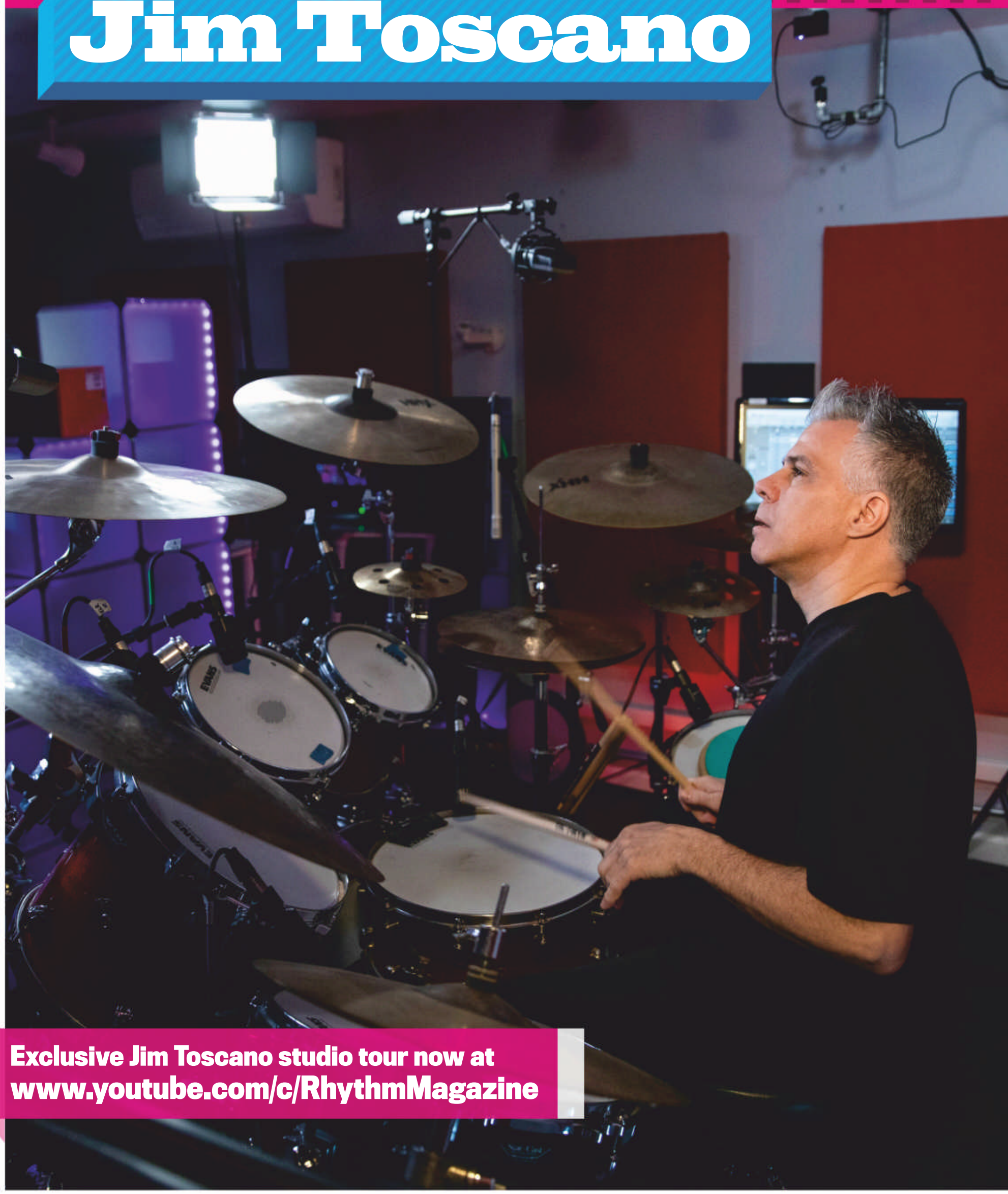
CONS: There are limitations to how these audio devices are laid out in order to keep them compact. HDMI cameras will need a capture device to convert the signal to USB.

USB AUDIO INTERFACE WITH HDMI CAMERAS AND A SWITCHER

PROS: You have a virtual series of channel strips that can control the gain EQ and effects for each microphone. These are usually rack-mountable and take up very little space. The video switcher will output a very high-quality image, and the Blackmagic ATEM Mini Pro has built-in capture, recording and encoding for livestreaming.

PRO STUDIO SETUP

Jim Toscano



Exclusive Jim Toscano studio tour now at www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

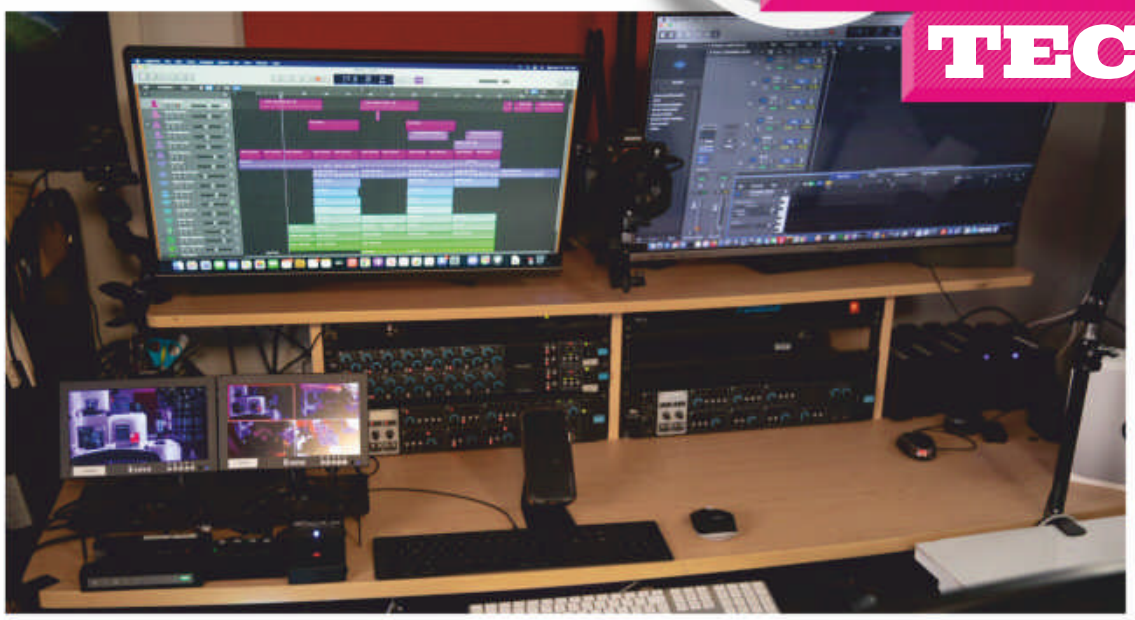
JIM TOSCANO'S GEAR LIST

AUDIO
FOCUSRITE LIQUID SAFFIRE 56 INTERFACES (2)
FOCUSRITE MKII DYNAMIC OCTOPRE (2)

DRUM MICS
FLOOR TOMS AUDIX D4 (2)
RACK TOM AUDIX D2 (3)
OVERHEADS AKG C214 (2)
KICK SHURE BETA 52A (OUT)
KICK AKG D112 (IN)
MIC MUTE SWITCH
SNARE AUDIX I5 TOP
SNARE SHURE BETA 56A BOTTOM
HI-HAT SHURE SM81

VIDEO
ROLAND V-1HD SWITCHER
BLACKMAGIC DESIGN ATEM MINI PRO ISO
SONY A7III MIRRORLESS CAMERA
GOPRO HERO7
GOPRO HERO5
GOPRO HERO4
ZOOM Q2N (2), ZOOM Q8
MAGEWELL HDMI CAPTURE PLUS

COMPUTER
MAC MINI (STREAMING, VIDEO)
MACPRO (AUDIO)



Jim Toscano's AUDIO SETUP

Jim Toscano's VIDEO SETUP

PRO STUDIO SETUP

Dave Weckl

Exclusive Dave Weckl studio tour now at www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

Images: Courtesy of Dave Weckl

Dave Weckl's AUDIO SETUP

Dave Weckl's VIDEO SETUP

DAVE WECKL'S GEAR LIST

AUDIO
AVID HD 16X16 INTERFACES

DRUM MICS
TOMS SHURE BETA 98/S
SNARE SHURE SM57 TOP AND BOTTOM
OVERHEADS SHURE KSM44
KICK SHURE BETA 52A INSIDE AND OUT
SHURE LAV MIC

VIDEO
ROLAND V-1HD SWITCHER
JVC PROFESSIONAL SERIES CAMCORDER
ZOOM Q8 (3)
MAGEWELL HDMI CAPTURE PLUS

COMPUTERS
MAC PRO, MACBOOK PRO

PRO STUDIO SETUP

David Garibaldi

DAVID GARIBALDI'S GEAR LIST

AUDIO

YAMAHA EAD10
AUDIO TECHNICA BPHS-1 HEADSET
YAMAHA MG12XU USB MIXER

VIDEO

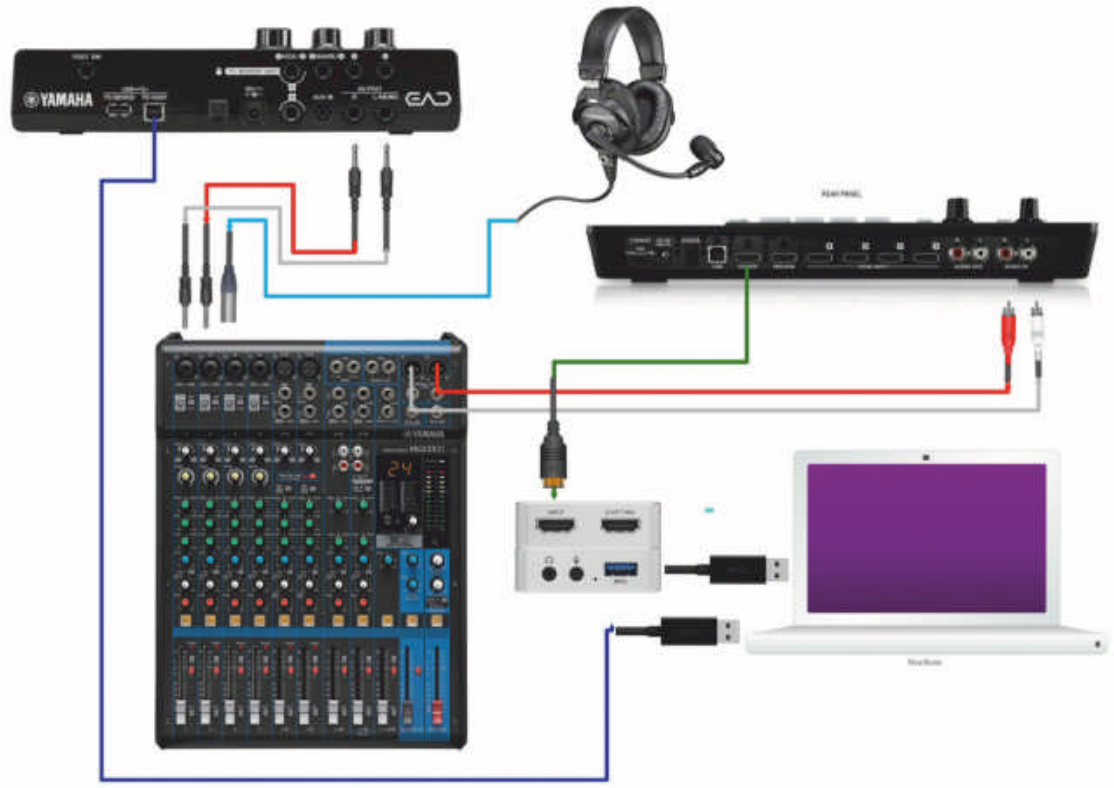
ROLAND V-1HD SWITCHER
MAGEWELL HDMI CAPTURE PLUS
BLACKMAGIC VIDEO ASSIST
ZOOM Q2N (2)
SONY A6400 MIRRORLESS CAMERA

COMPUTER

MACBOOK PRO

Image: Courtesy of David Garibaldi

David Garibaldi's **AUDIO SETUP**

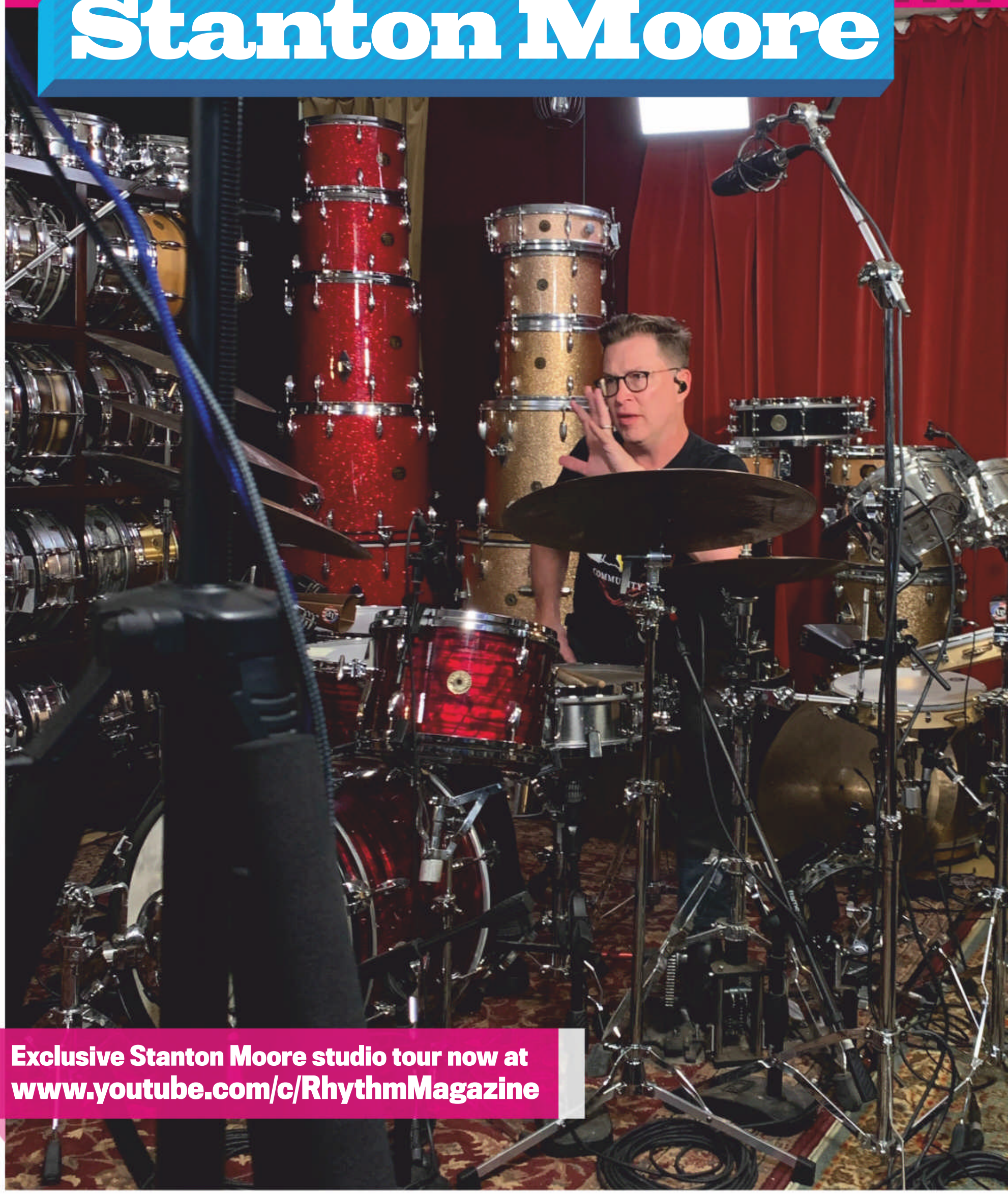


David Garibaldi's **VIDEO SETUP**

Exclusive David Garibaldi studio tour now at www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

PRO STUDIO SETUP

Stanton Moore



Exclusive Stanton Moore studio tour now at www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

Image: Nicholas Solnick

Image: Linda Del Rio

STANTON MOORE'S GEAR LIST

AUDIO
APOLLO 8P INTERFACES (2)

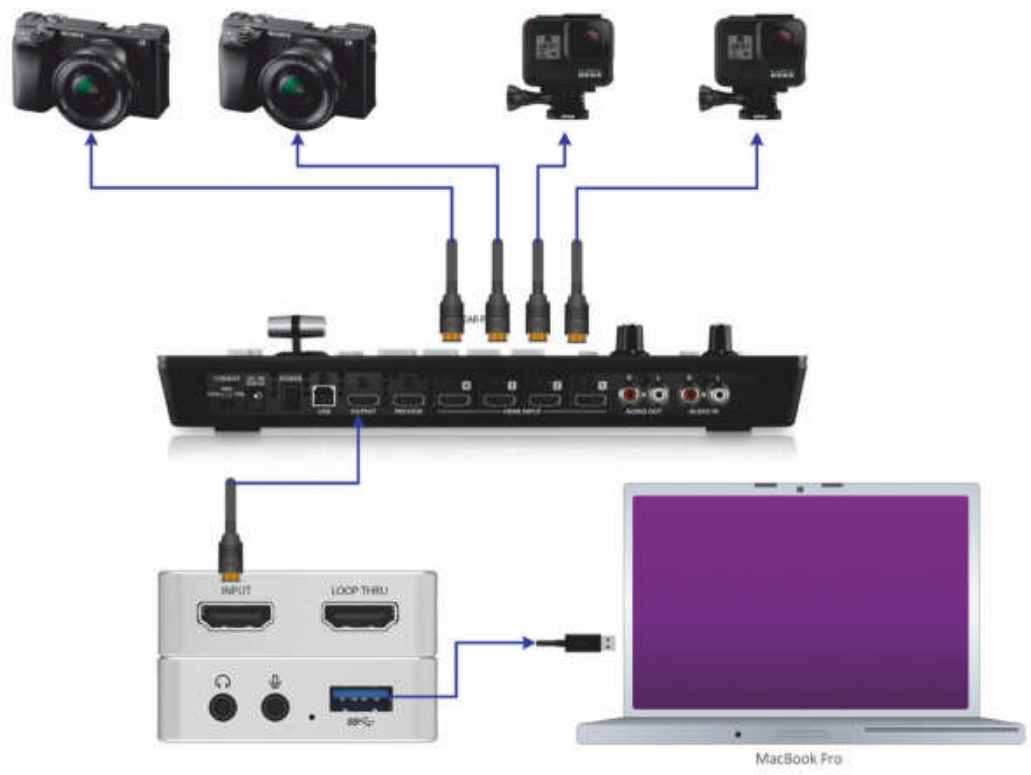
DRUM MICS
FLOOR TOMS AUDIX D6 (2)
PANDEIROS AUDIX D6
RACK TOM AUDIX D4
OVERHEADS AUDIX CX111 (2)
KICK EV RE20
SHURE LAV MIC
MIC MUTE SWITCH

VIDEO
ROLAND V-1HD SWITCHER
BLACKMAGIC DESIGN ATEM MINI PRO ISO
SONY A6400 MIRRORLESS CAMERAS (2)
GOPRO HERO7 (2)
MAGEWELL HDMI CAPTURE PLUS

COMPUTER
MACBOOK PRO

Stanton Moore's AUDIO SETUP

Stanton Moore's VIDEO SETUP



Lighting

EVERYTHING LOOKS BETTER WITH A LITTLE BIT OF LIGHTING!

The last thing you want to do is get on a Zoom lesson with a new student and have them think that you are teaching from an underground bunker with no signs of life. Make your space look warm and inviting. Most of us are trying to isolate sound, so a natural light source is often not an option. Some LED panels and practical lights – even RGB strip lights – can make your studio look bright, modern and fun. Make it as engaging as you can without causing a distraction.

BASIC LIGHTING SETUPS

From a webcam to a DSLR camera, everything just looks better when you add some lighting. You can get inexpensive LEDs online that have both tungsten and white light, so you can work with the colouring and change the look of even the cheapest webcam.

I'm going to present to you several setups that all work for online teaching with a platform like Zoom, and for shooting instructional videos for your students or followers on YouTube. The same setup will also work for livestreaming.

COLLABORATION IN A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT

Playing music is all about connections. At this point, we are very limited in our ability to play together online with no latency. There is a platform called JamKazam that does this to a limited degree. But the further the distance between the musicians, the worse the latency becomes – so if you're playing with someone in the next city, it might be fine, but if you're playing with somebody across the country, it's not going to work out very well.

As far as doing recording projects together, of course you can send your tracks anywhere in the world, collaborate with a musician and write great music without being in the same room. Much of today's professional recording is done in this way.

LIVESTREAMING

Livestreaming is a way to connect with people and interact like we would at a show, by using a chat function and reading questions from your viewers. It's a great way to promote the products that you have, such as a record coming out, your website, lessons or a book. Livestreaming builds a community!

For livestreaming, you have Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitch and many other platforms. You can livestream from your webcam or video camera using any of these platforms, or you can livestream from a free video-encoding program like OBS or a streaming service like StreamYard, Restream, BeLive, Ecamm Live, etc.

My advice to anybody looking to livestream is just turn on your camera and start. This way, you get the experience, you get over the fear and you learn very quickly how things work. Most importantly, you start connecting with others.

Don't forget that there's always just the possibility of hanging out with other musicians, getting together, talking about the state of things and learning from one another and connecting socially. It doesn't all have to be about business all of the time!

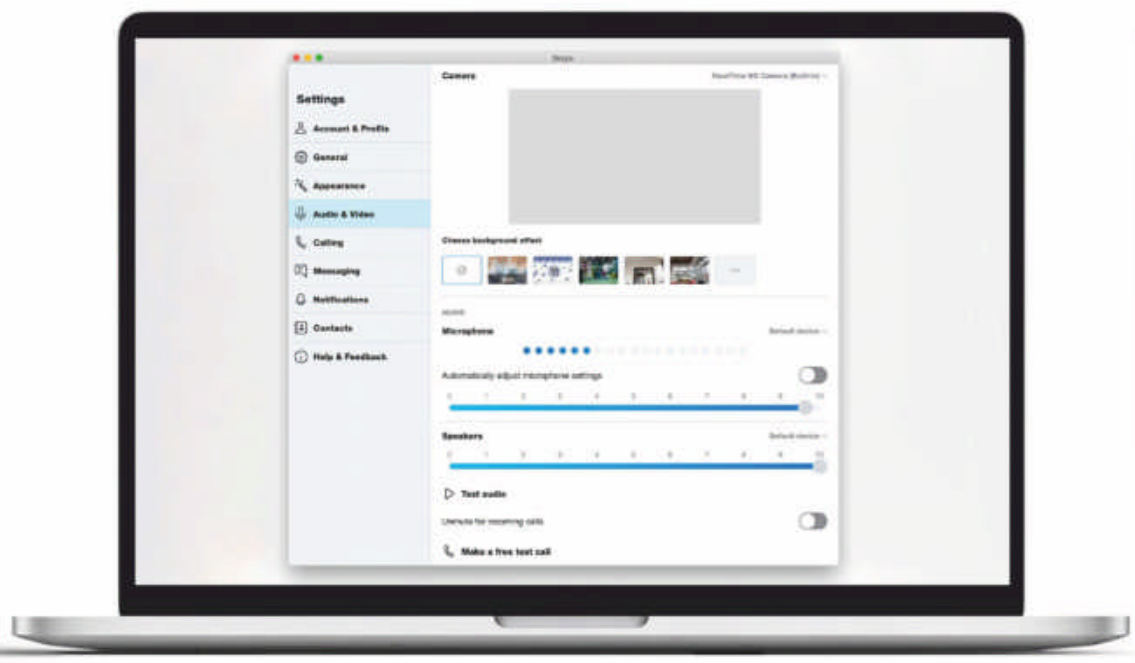
BEST PRACTICE VIDEO CONFERENCING TOOLS

ZOOM

In Zoom's Preferences menu, you will need to configure some settings. Navigate to Zoom's Audio Settings menu. Here, you can also choose and test your speaker and microphone. To make the sound best for playing music, especially drums, follow these settings:

- Uncheck the box that says 'Automatically adjust microphone volume'.
- Under the 'Suppress Background Noise' drop-down menu, choose 'Low'.
- Go to the bottom of this window and click 'Advanced'.
- Make sure 'Echo cancellation' is set to auto.
- Check the box 'Show in-meeting option' to 'Enable original sound'.
- Uncheck 'Disable echo cancellation'.
- Check 'High fidelity music mode' (if you have a good internet connection).
- Use stereo audio (if you have a good internet connection).
- Go back to the audio settings screen and make sure you 'Enable original sound'.

TIP: You can record in Zoom without a client, which essentially gives you the ability to sound-check your setup.



SKYPE

When you launch Skype on the left-hand side of the screen on the three dots, or in Preferences, you can navigate to audio and video settings. Here you can choose your camera and microphone. There are no advanced audio settings as with Zoom.

Recording your lessons gives a clear idea of how your students see and hear your lessons. You can easily screen share. Make sure to click on 'Test audio'. Also, making a free test call will ensure that things are working properly before you call your student. You can easily switch between cameras on Skype's window once you are in your call using the down arrow by your image.

JIM TOSCANO is a NYC freelance drummer, educator and clinician and is the author of *Filling In The Grooves: The Ultimate Guide To Drum Fills*. Jim has studied with world-class drummers Dom Famularo, Marko Djordjevic and Claus Hessler. He has built a successful private teaching and technology coaching practice with more than 200 students, and he maintains a busy online clinic schedule as well as his virtual Hand Technique Workshop. He is currently building an online technology course for drummers with friend and partner Scott Kettner.

Key kit: *Sabian cymbals, Prologix percussion, Offset pedals, Tama drums*
www.jimtoscano.com

BACK IN THE SPOTLIGHT

CINDY BLACKMAN

From grooving with Lenny Kravitz and Santana to full-blown fusion with her own band, Cindy Blackman Santana is one of drumming's most adaptable and versatile players. Even as she steps out as a vocalist on her new album, she leaves no doubt that the drums remain her first love. Time to *Give The Drummer Some*.

Words: **David West** Image: **Maryanne Bilham**

"It was long overdue for me to do a record," says Cindy Blackman Santana. "The energy was at such a build-up that if I didn't put something out, I felt like I would have probably imploded somehow."

It's been a decade since Blackman Santana's last album as a bandleader. Her 2010 release *Another Lifetime* was a celebration of Tony Williams' music, an album of hard-hitting fusion, but with her new release, *Give The Drummer Some*, Blackman Santana gives free rein to her creative impulses with a record that spans funk, hip-hop, rock, instrumental jazz and fusion.

On top of the sheer breadth of musical styles on display, the album sees the drummer step into the limelight as a vocalist, working with Narada Michael Walden, a renowned drummer in his own right and a producer who's worked with such heavyweights as Aretha Franklin, Mariah Carey, and Ray Charles.

He's not the only big name involved with *Give The Drummer Some*, which features Blackman Santana's husband, Carlos Santana, on eight tracks, and guest appearances from John McLaughlin, Kirk Hammett, and Vernon Reid, who previously played with Blackman Santana in the Spectrum Road fusion supergroup.

On the line from Hawaii, the drummer gives *Rhythm* the lowdown on this exciting new chapter in her storied career. ▷

Cindy Blackman

Image: © 2020 Split Prism Media/*Count Me In*

How have you coped with being off the road for so long?
"That's been difficult, in terms of being able to do what I love best, which is play music, play drums, and connecting with people in a live situation. It's been interesting to find other ways to connect with people – certainly the internet has helped.

"For me, it makes me go inside more and really focus on connecting with people on an inner and very spiritual level. As far as the playing goes, I just stay on my drums as much as possible and enjoy that.

"I have been able to do some recording in these no-tour times, I've done some different projects, the last was the next Santana record, which was very cool because we were able to get the core band into the studio. We all had to get COVID tested and, fortunately, all the people who were involved passed. It felt really good to play with people because it had been so long since we'd been able to do that."

Where did you record?
"We were at a studio in the Bay Area, I believe it's called Laughing Tiger. We had a good time; it was very relaxed, very low key in terms of profile, but high energy in terms of everybody's output. I'm looking forward to this music coming out. I think his working title at this point is *Blessings And Miracles*."

It's so important to stay creative during this strange time!
"Yeah, that's the whole thing. We can't disengage from ourselves, we can't disengage from life – we have to find a way to stay connected. That's a huge part of human experience. Humanity is to engage, to be engaged with each other and to grow together as a whole.

"There's a lot of growth happening right now because there is so much energy that's coming out of the woodwork, be it negative or positive, and a lot of it is quite negative, but I'm hoping that once we get to the other side of this, that we will have grown exponentially, and we will treat each other with much more reverence, compassion, care and love. This division or separation that we're experiencing at this point can certainly put a wedge in all of that, but we can't let it."

You did a few vocal things on *Another Lifetime*, but with *Give The Drummer Some* you're really stepping out as a singer!
"It's something for me to explore and to express melody in a different way, to express messages and to tell stories in a different way. I was definitely pushed to try it because without a push I don't know that I would have gone that far with the vocals. I sing along with music a lot. If I'm listening to Miles Davis's band, my favourite band, which is from the '60s, I sing the solos because I love that music. Carlos would hear me sing, he's like, 'Whoa, do you always do that?' 'Well, yeah'. He said, 'You need to sing, you have a great voice'.

"This is something I just do for me because I love to hear what they're playing; I love to hear the different notes they choose over different chords, the rhythms with which they sing those notes. I just do it because I love it. He kept encouraging me to sing, as did my mom, actually.

"I did sing a song on *Power Of Peace* which is the Santana/Isley Brothers record – it's a song that I wrote called 'I Remember'. I was hoping that Ronnie [Isley] would sing it, but he felt it was too feminine. He was naming some singers that he felt would be good choices, and Carlos was like, 'If you're not going to sing it, I think Cindy should sing it'. I love the song. I wrote it, I feel the emotion of it, so I sang it and it obviously made the record. Narada Michael Walden heard that track, and he told me that he wanted to produce me, so it just snowballed into us doing a lot of writing together."

What was it like having another drummer produce you?
"It was cool because we speak the same language. He's a drummer, so he understands me and I understand him. It was a nice flow. It was very easy. I would say, 'Hey Michael, I have this groove that I'm working on, I want to do something on this'. I'd record something and send it, and he'd be right on it, because he just got it. He understood it."

Did you talk about the sound of the drums on the album?
"We did, because I certainly have the sound in mind that I have to have. As a producer who's done a lot of commercial songs and who's had a lot of hits on radio, he has his idea of things, but it's my drum kit, my sound.

"There were a couple of songs where we melded together in terms of some of the drum tones, but basically, I want

Image: Maryanne Bitham

my drums to sound a certain way. It's my voice. I played my drums in a very raw way, I don't like compression, I think it chokes the drums and it doesn't allow them to speak. So I'm always fighting compression – not just with him because he definitely understands what I want, but with mastering engineers and such.

"That's been a lifelong issue for me, because I love a certain sound in the drums. I wanted the drums in some cases to sound really big and bombastic, so I used sizes that would give me that from the core without having to make many adjustments in mixing."

Did you use a couple of kits?

"The instrumental stuff was recorded in Las Vegas at the Palms Studio, and Narada wasn't a part of that; I produced that myself with a little help from the musicians. With that, I used a Gretsch kit that was made for me in 2012.

"Gretsch hadn't made a solid shell kit, and for a couple of years I was saying, 'Oh, can you guys make me a solid shell kit?' They said, 'We don't do solid shell drums'. I said, 'But if you did, you would make it better than anybody!' They finally did it. Paul Cooper, who is an amazing drum maker over at Gretsch, liked the kit so much that he made one for himself.

"I now have two of those kits and he has one, so there are three of those solid shell kits in existence made by Gretsch. Fast forwarding to my record, on the instrumental stuff I used that kit with a variety of snare drums. Then on the recordings I did at Tarpan Studios with Narada, I used a 1972 vintage Gretsch kit and a couple of different snare drums that I swapped in and out."

How did you track?

"Different things were recorded in different ways. All of the instrumental things we ▷

MEMORIES OF PRINCE

"The song 'I Need A Drummer' came from a story. I was on the road with Lenny Kravitz and we did a show in Minneapolis, and afterwards we went to Prince's studio. We went in and we did a jam session with Prince – our band plus Prince, I think there might have been one or two cats from his band, but we all played in the session. It was ridiculous, it was really slamming, and Prince went to the organ and he started playing.

"The way it was set up, it was right across the room from the drums, so I was looking directly at him. He started singing into the mic, 'I need a drummer! I need a drummer!' I'm thinking to myself, 'Whoa, is Prince saying he wants a new drummer? Is he trying to audition drummers for his band?'

"I was in the studio with Narada getting ready to have a writing session, and I was looking at this picture he has of Prince. It's an amazing photo of him playing his guitar – you can see all of the sweat and the intention and the energy. I told Narada the story, and he said, 'Cindy, you should write that'. I said, 'I can't write a song called 'I Need A Drummer'. I don't need a drummer. I am a drummer!' He's like, 'But it's your story, it's something Prince sang to you, it's special, you need to write that'."

KEY KIT

Gretsch drums
Istanbul Agop cymbals
Vater sticks
Remo drumheads
DW hardware
LP percussion

recorded in the Palms were basically played with the musicians all in the studio playing live at the same time. Then we added a couple of parts here and there.

"There was one song called 'Dance Party' and that one, my friend Yameen Allworld sang this beatbox groove and Ray Angry played piano, and they sent me this track, just beatbox and piano. I added drums, I sang the vocal part, and then I got a trumpet player on it, and I got Carlos to play a little on it, too.

"Some of the tracks were built and some of them were live. 'Mother Earth' is just myself playing on it; it's a drum piece, so I built that. I played the first part which was the timpani-sounding part with mallets on the drums; I added the drum groove, the snare drum parts, different percussive parts on top of it. 'Black Pearl' we all played together, and 'Evolution Revolution' we all played together, and then some of them we completely layered, like 'Imagine'."

PAYING TRIBUTE TO HER HEROES

The cover art for *Give The Drummer* Some features five drummers who have inspired Blackman Santana – Art Blakey, Elvin Jones, Max Roach, Roy Haynes and Philly Joe Jones.

"I'm so proud to have them on there," she says. "I would have had more if it were possible. I always want to give a nod to them because I just appreciate all that they gave us musically, all the energy they put into playing, all the life situations they endured to bring this music forward.

"Art Blakey told me so many stories, and he talked about being on the road with the Billy Eckstine band. He said that because the band was made up of melanin-dominant people, black people, African-Americans, they weren't allowed to stay in hotels at that time. They were driving in a bus, and they had to find places they could hide their bus at night so they could sleep and not be arrested or attacked or bothered or hung. Many times, they would find families who would let them park the bus behind their home, so they had some cloud cover.

"They endured so much to bring this music forward and to express the element of creativity. I always want to thank them. That's why they're featured in the artwork on my record. We all, please, give them thanks in heaven where they are on the other side because they gave us music, light, love, joy and rhythm – and they still give it through their music."

"DRUMMING, DEFINITELY, IS FRONT AND CENTRE FOR ME."

Vernon Reid plays on three tracks, but this is a different vibe to Spectrum Road.

"Vernon is a good buddy of mine, and we have a great musical relationship because we love a lot of the same stuff. He's toured with my band, we toured together with Spectrum Road which was incredible because it had some of my very favourite people and players in the entire world – Vernon played guitar, John Medeski played keyboards, and our late, great dearly beloved Jack Bruce played bass, so that was a very special time for all of us.

"It was amazing to be with Jack. We've had some great experiences together, Vernon and I. We're just good friends on top of that, so playing with him is always a gas. When he arrived at the studio in Las Vegas, myself and the engineer were there and my drum tech – Vernon popped into the control room with this big, huge smile on his face, and he just lit the whole room up. I'm like, 'Okay, it's on now!' That's the kind of energy he brings. Just to be around him is great because he's got such a positive vibe – but to play with him is really special."

Had you ever played with Kirk Hammett before?

"No, I just loved his playing from afar. The first time I ever heard Kirk I was on the road with Lenny and we played opposite Metallica. I heard this whole ball of energy – whoa, that guy is ripping! I thought okay, he does that really great, but I had no idea that he has such a versatility and that he's so musical in so many other ways, too. His ears are just amazing.

"Having him was spectacular, and having him and Vernon play together on 'Evolution Revolution' was epic. They're both like young lions with balls of fire in their hands. His whole vibe and energy, he's so laidback and relaxed, it's wonderful. He's actually on the next Carlos record, too. Carlos loved him and Vernon playing together, and he wanted to play with Kirk, so Kirk is on a song on Carlos' next record called 'America For Sale'. He's killing on that as well."

Was it important for you to have tracks like 'Mother Earth' and 'Velocity' that put the drums in the spotlight?

"Oh yes, absolutely, and thank you for that question. I by no means want anyone to get the impression that I'm putting drums in the backseat, absolutely not. This is an expression that I enjoy doing in terms of the singing, but drums are first and foremost and number one for me.

"When I'm able to tour, I will probably do some singing, but I'm going to be doing a lot of drumming. I don't want to misrepresent what people are going to get when they come to a concert with my band. They're going to hear a lot of drumming, because I love drumming.

"I recorded some drum solos that didn't make this record – only because I had so many songs I wanted on the record, I had to cut things off. Drumming, definitely, is front and centre for me. That's my love, that's my favourite thing in the world, that's the way that I'm most comfortable, that's the way I feel best expressing emotion and creativity and energy and everything that I feel: love, compassion, romance, aggression, innovation, creativity. Creativity involves every single motion under the sun, above the sun and around the sun – just to express that, my way is drumming."

The range of styles on the album seems like a reflection of all the things you've done over your career?

"Absolutely, I have to keep that. I love lots of music and I've played different types of music. I've played with Angela Bofill, Lenny Kravitz, Jackie McLean, Joe Henderson, I've played with Carlos, with John McLaughlin, with different people who are coming from different directions, and I appreciate and love it all. But I have to have the creative aspect in there.

"My heroes are Art Blakey, Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, Max Roach, Roy Haynes – even with just those five individuals, you're talking about huge balls of energy and creativity and a whole lot of drumming going on. That's what I'm made of and I have to express that.

"Being on the road with Lenny was awesome because I could do the Lenny thing, but then he would take a year, two years off. In that time, I recorded with my band, I toured with my band, and then when it came time for the Lenny band to tour again, I did. I was able to keep all of it flowing. That's what I'm doing playing with Carlos. I love playing with Carlos, my band is a little different, so when we're off I tour with my band. I'll keep that up because I'm expressing many sides of myself."

Do different styles of drumming require a different headspace?

"They all stem from the same place in terms of giving the music what it needs. I remember I was in the studio recording a Wallace Roney record, and Ron Carter was on bass. We were on a break, between songs, and Ron Carter was talking – we were all young musicians, so we all happily shut up and listened. One of the things he said was that every situation is different, and every situation has a different need. The thing musicians have to do is to feed that situation what it needs. I never forgot that. That's what I try to do."

Image: Courtesy of Gretsch

This Side Of Paradise

DANFLI

You Me At Six's inventive, flash-averse drummer-turned-producer is back... and on new album *SUCKAPUNCH* he's turning the dance grooves up to 11

Words: Rich Chamberlain **Image:** Katy Cummings

It has been more than a decade since Dan Flint firmly landed on *Rhythm*'s radar, thanks to his effortlessly cool and inventive playing with Surrey Brit rock heroes You Me At Six. By the time the band's third album – 2011's *Sinners Never Sleep* – came out, he'd already developed his own signature style, a creative rock player just as comfortable playing off the tom hoops throughout a verse as he was powering a thick 4-4 crash-laden chorus.

Back then, he reminded us of a young Travis Barker, a drummer whom Flint also namechecked (along with Dave Grohl and Chad Smith) in those early interviews as a hero of his. Similarly to Barker spreading his musical wings into hip-hop, Flint has stretched out from those early days and dipped his toe in a treasure trove of genres, wading particularly deeply into dance.

"I have a greater pool of influences now," he tells *Rhythm* in the run-up to the release of his band's new album, *SUCKAPUNCH*. "I love house and dance music, hip-hop and R&B. I think when you're younger you have the mindset that you're in a rock band, so you listen to rock music. Now, I don't listen to a lot of bands that sound like us."

A decade of immersion in a slew of genres – as both drummer and producer – has clearly widened his musical palette. He still has his own style, but now it smashes out of the confines of what you might expect to hear on a record from 30-something Brit rockers.

Granted, *SUCKAPUNCH*, the band's seventh record, does pack some of those rock wallops – 'Nice To Me' in particular has a moment reminiscent of Flint channelling Taylor Hawkins – but they stand out for their rarity. Instead, dark electronic tones and stripped-back breakbeats fill an album powered by Flint's booming bass drum.

Ahead of the record's release, we spoke to Flint about his ever-widening musical tastes, the impact of getting into the producer's chair and how he fell back in love with playing the drums. ▷

Dan Flint

You recorded in Thailand – why there?
"We had everything planned over the summer in 2019 to make a record, and then it turned out that different things happened in our personal lives and we thought we should get away. I knew someone who owned a studio in Thailand, which looked phenomenal, so we spent five weeks out there.

"We're really excited by this album and have put a lot of work into it. There has been so much time this year that you're in your own head – you're not leaving the house, you overthink things. We have had to try and keep a level head and realise that we have this great album ready to go. Had we not recorded in Thailand last year, we would have struggled to get together and record the album, so thank God we did that! I've fallen back in love with playing drums."

You're 15 years in now – is it difficult to keep your playing fresh?
"When I moved into my house six years ago, I built a studio and predominantly played drums in there. Over the years it has turned into this thing where I spend a lot of time at the computer producing tracks. When I talk about falling back in love with drums, I mean loving sitting behind the kit and playing.

"I've been guilty in the last few years of building beats on a computer, and sometimes the first time I would play these beats on an actual kit would be when I went into the studio. Dan Austin [You Me At Six producer] and I would break these beats made on the computer down and recreate things, break things down, play things on top. I was playing drums in the studio in the way that you would build a track on a computer – a dance track, a hip-hop track or whatever. It has come alive in a different way."

We've spoken previously about your recording drums and cymbals separately – was that the case on *SUCKAPUNCH*?
"Everything was done pretty much isolated – there were not many tracks where I would play all of the drums from start to finish like a standard drum track. There was a lot of going in and saying, 'I think we need a hi-hat pattern here'. I would have done kick, snare and percussion, and then I'd go in and play a hi-hat groove. It means it's almost impossible to play some of the beats live! I might be playing a hi-hat groove with two hands, but then there is also something on the toms and the snare and kick... It's like three or four drummers are all playing together. Figuring out how to play it all live is part of the fun. During lockdown, I have gone back to playing just on the kit a lot."

Image: Dylan Test

Has your production experience given you a producer's ear for drum parts?
"100%. Even to the point that I now know effects that can be used and what to do to make the drums sound certain ways. On a tom pattern we might have used effects on it to make it sound washed out and wide, then we might have the snare samples through the middle but with a certain reverb – I will be thinking about the drums and sounds from all of those perspectives now.

"Producing has massively changed the way that I view playing drums. Now, every groove and fill is really thought about even more than before, I hate an elaborate drum fill where it feels like the section of the song stops, and you go, 'Oh my God, what's that?!' It can be really cool, but it needs to be musical, and it needs to flow with the whole track.

"Being in the studio is my favourite thing about being in a band: you are hearing something that only weeks before you had imagined. You're hearing it come alive. When we finish a drum track, we will listen to it start to finish, and the process is so creative now that even just the drums by themselves you can listen to and enjoy on their own. They're that entertaining. If that is your foundation for the song, then you're already winning if you can listen to the drum track alone and say, 'Wow'."

There is much more of an electronic sound to the kit on *SUCKAPUNCH* compared to previous You Me At Six records...
"There's a lot of electronics on the record. I find samples and drums that I like online and manipulate them in Logic when I'm building tracks. We have tried to achieve an exciting, bombastic-style sound. We used this amazing Vistalite kit in Thailand in the studio that had this super old Black Beauty on it. I was worried about those kits with them being acrylic, wondering if there might be too much attack, but they had a really nice warm tone to them. We were so surprised at how great they sounded and how versatile they were. You could just tune them slightly differently or we would put towels on them or even gaffa tape a crisp packet onto the toms. We would use different mics within the kit or would distort the mics to achieve these big drum sounds. We coupled that with the samples and how they were manipulated, and then Dan Austin's production..."

The beats are stripped back, and there's a breakbeat feel on several tracks...
"The drum tracks by themselves quite often on this record *do* sound quite breakbeat. That comes from the fact that we were often jamming over the top of a track that I had built. We would jam over it three or four times, and then I'd maybe make some changes and we would pick loops out of what I had played and place them around the track at different moments. It was almost paint by numbers, like we were building a puzzle and putting it all together in the right places.

"There might be something ridiculous, like I'd drop my stick and it would make a certain noise, and Dan would cut that section out and put these effects on it. We might have this 4/4 pattern and then we would chop to another loop and it would be all distorted for the back half of things.

"They had a variable speed machine inside the Thailand studio which I used to speed beats up that I had played super slow. I could put different things in places where you might not be able to if you were playing fast. It had this almost out of phase, drum 'n' bass, breakbeat feel to it that you could only really get from using this machine. Dan had never seen one before, so we thought we should use it. That was a theme to the record: if there was something that was cool, we used it."

The record as a whole is cohesive, your kit sound is cohesive, but your playing is over the map. Has your maturity as a drummer allowed you to flash through all of these influences while ensuring everything hangs together?

“EVERY DRUMMER SHOULD FILM THEMSELVES. IT’S QUITE DEPRESSING AT THE START BECAUSE YOU GO, ‘OH GOD, I’M NOT AS GOOD AS I THOUGHT I WAS!’ BUT IT MAKES YOU FOCUS ON WHAT YOU NEED TO PRACTISE AND WORK ON.”

Image: Katy Cummings

KEY KIT

GRETSCH USA CUSTOM KIT

22"x14" bass drum
16"x14" bass drum
12"x8" rack tom
16"x16" floor tom
14"x16½" Bell Brass snare
10"x5" Steel side snare

ZILDJIAN CYMBALS

24" K Light ride
15" K Light hi-hats
20" K Dark Thin crash
20" A Custom crash
20" A Custom EFX crash

PLUS
Gibraltar hardware
Remo drumheads
Zildjian sticks

"BEING IN THE STUDIO IS MY FAVOURITE THING ABOUT BEING IN A BAND: YOU ARE HEARING SOMETHING THAT ONLY WEEKS BEFORE YOU HAD IMAGINED. YOU'RE HEARING IT COME ALIVE."

Image: Dylan Test

"I wouldn't have been able to do this on the first few albums. Along with learning how to record, mix and produce, coupled with my drumming ability improving and being able to break my grooves down, I now can hear what we can do with the tracks. It is mostly down to our experience, but it is also working with Dan. We have that belief that whatever you can hear in your head, we can do."

Your love of dance music has clearly had a big impact on your approach to playing what are, in essence, rock songs...

"Now I see that I can play drums the way that I play drums, but I can do it with this other music that I love in mind. I can hear DJs doing these things with samples that I love, and then I can do it on a drum kit. This is something that can be quite unique to me – it will still be me playing, and it will always have that element of sounding like me.

"That is something that I am most proud of because it is so hard to do: having your own distinct sound. It has just come from giving myself the freedom to realise that I like that type of music, so I am going to make my drumming in that style. I'm at the age now where you realise that you can essentially do whatever you want to do. Again, having Dan Austin in your corner gives you the confidence to think, 'I want my drums to sound like that, so let's do it'. It's not like we are putting dance tracks out as You Me At Six – that wouldn't work. We have just taken elements of things that I love and then brought it back into this more rock 'n' roll kind of vibe. I love it!"

The bass drum carries the record and powers it with rather flashy fills and drum moments – does that approach come from your dance music influence?

Image: Katy Cummings

"It comes from the dance music a lot! I didn't want huge fills that didn't really have a place within the track. A lot of my beats are built while thinking, 'Could someone jump to this? Can you dance to it?' Also, the way that we record, the kick drum is played by itself and then I build the patterns. That allows Dan to crank whatever effects he wants to use on the kick drum. We can really think about what sound we want from the kick because the world is our oyster – there're no cymbals spilling over, no snare drums and toms.

"Sometimes it works really well to have that spill, but *not* having it means we can think about how we want the kick to sound and how it will come across on the record. Having it isolated means that we can have it thumping through the track."

You do have some fills on the record – do you have to justify to yourself when you can treat yourself to a fill?

"I often go off the reaction of the room. We play the track and I have a wild take where I play stupid drum fills, and there might be something in there that works. One of my favourite drum fills that I have ever written was on the last album just after the middle eight of 'Fast Forward'. It's so simple, but all of us thought it brought the perfect power to the album. We were sat there joking around, going, 'Drum fill of the year, that'. You've only got to listen to 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' to know that you don't have to do the craziest fill, it just needs to be musical."

Is there a gospel chops influence that has crept in as well?

"I love gospel drummers. When I'm playing along at home to dance music, I use it as a metronome really because it is mainly just four on the floor – so I'm always messing around trying to do these gospel fills. I think I have been trying to find a way to make that work within my playing. I get very particular about the fills and am always thinking if it is the right one."

You told us before that you're a self-loathing drummer, and in your quest to improve, you record and critique yourself regularly. Is that still the case?

"I still do this a lot. This year, I started my own drum academy, which has meant I have watched some of my back lessons, and recently I have allowed myself to think, 'Ok, Dan, you are actually good at this'. I've started to give myself a little bit of praise, and I've allowed myself to think that I'm not completely s**t. If there are moments where a tiny thing goes wrong, I really am quite harsh on myself, but that is just me. I'm a 'nothing will ever be good enough' kind of guy, a perfectionist. I still watch myself playing drums a lot. Every drummer should film themselves. It's quite depressing at the start because you go, 'Oh God, I'm not as good as I thought I was!' But it makes you focus on what you need to practise and work on."

FAME ACADEMY

FANCY TAKING A LESSON FROM DAN? NOW YOU CAN!

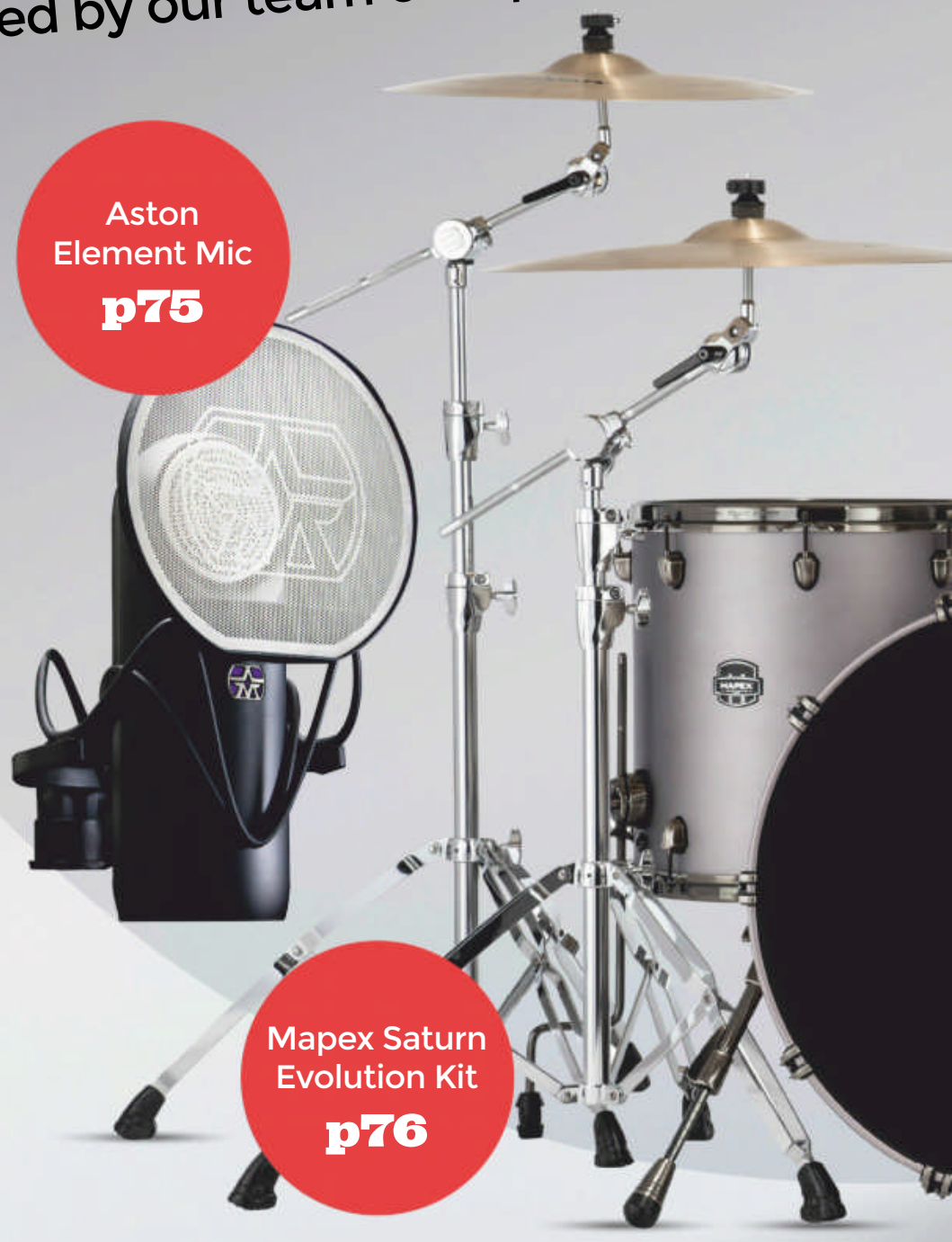
"I've started a drum academy for fans who want to learn from me, which has been good fun. Over lockdown last year, I thought to myself that if I'd have had Travis Barker sitting there for an hour showing me how to play 'What's My Age Again?' I would have absolutely loved that, so I thought there might be some people out there who would want to learn from me. I also cover how I create my beats, what I'm thinking and feeling when I do certain fills, what I am trying to say in my drumming, and get people thinking about being a musician and not just the person who plays the beats at the back.

"I go live every week with it, and I also send personal videos to my students. It has been so rewarding to see people improving in their playing and enjoying themselves, especially in what has been such a rough year for everyone. It has been great, and maybe one of them will be in a successful band one day – and I'll be in the stands watching them, going, 'I taught him or her how to play the drums!' Hopefully, I'll be able to blag a backstage pass and go watch them when I'm old and grey!"

Image: Ed Whitfield

Gear!

The latest kits and the new gear drummers need – reviewed and rated by our team of experts



Aston Element Mic p75

Mapex Saturn Evolution Kit p76

A happy new year to you all! And here's hoping that this one brings us a little more positivity than last year (and maybe even some gigs!)

Normally, at this time of year we'd still be recuperating after spending a week in California, taking in all the mouth-watering new drum gear at the NAMM Show. Despite the unfortunate (and let's be honest, unsurprising) cancellation of the show this year, the good news is that there have still been tons of new releases and announcements of new products for 2021, which we'll be getting our hands on for review over the coming months.

In this issue, we have not one, but two lead reviews. On the acoustic drum front, Mark Whitlam takes a look at the Mapex Saturn Evolution kit, while Matt Fisher checks out Yamaha's new DTX6K3-X kit.

Continuing the electronic theme, I'll be taking a deep dive into the world of Aerodrums: How do they work, and do they have what it takes to replace a normal e-kit?

Meanwhile, the one-and-only Geoff Nicholls gets hands-on with Paiste's new Color Sound 900 cymbals, and we've got our mitts on the award-winning Element from Aston Microphones. Bring it on!

Tom Bradley

Rhythm Gear Editor

Meet Rhythm's Reviewers

Rhythm has been reviewing the gear drummers need for decades. Our team of expert reviewers have sat behind countless kits on stage and in the studio so you can rely on them to bring you the right verdict. Plus, we find out what they've seen or heard recently that's excited them...

TOM BRADLEY

With an unquenchable thirst for new drum gear, Tom is perfectly placed to be *Rhythm*'s reviews editor. He's not only a longstanding member of our review team but also a lecturer at BIMM and a busy performing drummer. You may recognise Tom as the man behind the kit in many of the online gear videos on our YouTube channel.

WHAT HAS GOT YOU EXCITED RECENTLY?

"Without doubt the metrically modulated covers of 'Everybody Wants To Rule The World' by Tears For Fears. George 'Spanky' McCurdy absolutely slays it."

MARK WHITLAM

Mark is a freelance musician who has played for varied artists, from Mercury Prize-nominee Eliza Carthy through to jazz and funk legend Pee Wee Ellis. He is currently one-quarter of ECM recording artist Iain Ballamy's new band, featuring pianist Jason Rebello. Mark is a senior lecturer at BIMM Institute Bristol, where he has taught for the last ten years.

WHAT HAS GOT YOU EXCITED RECENTLY?

"Pretty much anything from Carter Maclean, but his playing to the song 'Only Children' is sublime – groove, feel, creativity and taste. What's not to like?"

Rhythm Verdict

The **RHYTHM RECOMMENDED** award is given to those products that score seven or eight out of ten. These are products that, although not quite scoring top marks, are strong products in their field.

The **RHYTHM STAR BUY** is awarded to those products that score nine or even ten out of ten for design, construction, function and value.

Rhythm Ratings

Here's what our ratings represent:

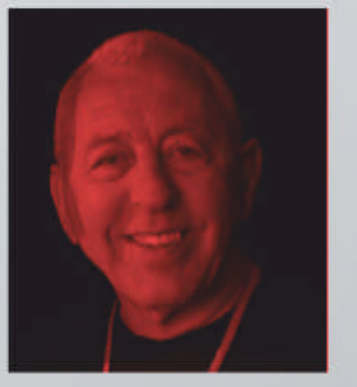
Poor: Sub-standard product	1 - 2
Average: Acceptable but uninspiring	3 - 4
Good: Above average	5 - 6
Excellent: Superior product	7 - 8
Outstanding: Impossible to fault	9 - 10

MATT FISHER

Matt has performed with some of the UK's most prominent musicians, such as Tina May, Jacqui Dankworth, Najma Akhtar and Steve Waterman. He has toured around the world working in a variety of styles, from jazz to world music. Matt teaches at Chichester University and is an examiner for Trinity College London.

WHAT HAS GOT YOU EXCITED RECENTLY?

"There's a great young New York drummer called Greyson Nekrutman who performs note-perfect transcriptions he has done of the likes of Buddy Rich and Tony Williams. The level of detail and control he displays is outstanding, and at times rather scary!"



GEOFF NICHOLLS

A regular contributor to *Rhythm* for over 20 years, Geoff is a musician, author, journalist, and lecturer. In the '70s he signed to Decca, EMI and Phonogram in various bands. He was then presenter on BBC's award-winning *Rockschool* in 1984 and 1987. His books include *The Drum Book: A History Of The Rock Drum Kit* and *The Drum Handbook*.

WHAT HAS GOT YOU EXCITED RECENTLY?

"I've been struggling all year to play David Garibaldi's 'The Oakland Stroke' groove. Ten minutes every day and still a way to go..."

Yamaha DTX6K3-X Kit

Yamaha steps up with its latest DTX6 series of electric kits and brand-new DTX Pro module

Words: **Matt Fisher**

PRICE: £1,974

Yamaha has been developing high-end musical instruments and professional audio equipment for years, as well as producing some of the best acoustic drum kits to be found on stages and in studios around the world. The new line of electric DTX6 kits proves itself no exception to the Yamaha family.

Loaded with completely new high-resolution sounds and a host of sound creation controls – as well as comprehensive connectivity with computers and mobile devices – the DTX6 is more than just a new electronic kit on the market. Available in three configurations to suit a range of budgets (DTX6K3-X, DTX6K2, DTX6K-X), we were sent the DTX6K3-X, which is the top spec of this lineup.

Let's dive deep into what this new electric kit has to offer.

Sound Module

The standout feature of the kit is the new DTX Pro module, which Yamaha describes as a 'next generation' sound module. Compared to previous models, it is much more powerful and has many more features, boasting over 700 sounds arranged into 40 preset kits, along with slots for 200 user kits. It is clear that a lot of care and detail has gone into the recording of the drum sounds, which were recorded at some of the best studios in the world.

On the main face of the module there are the three Kit Modifiers: Ambience, Compression and Effects. These alone give intuitive control of both the overall kit and individual pad sounds, which can be altered in real time without interrupting the creative flow – meaning there is no need to deep-dive through several menus to adjust and tweak the sounds. We found that we were able to mainly concentrate on these three controllers.

When the drums were originally sampled, as well as the various kits being recorded, the unique natural ambience of the studios where they were recorded was also sampled. Turning the Ambience dial can instantly add this natural ambience into the drum kit sound whilst playing. The Compression Modifier adds 'sonic glue' when introduced subtly, or it can give the kit a more aggressive character when turned up. This is in addition to the individual compression that can be added to any pad.

The Effect Modifier offers us a whole host of effects, from reverb, to ring-modulator and flanger. All this plus a myriad of other sound modifiers, such as muffling, tuning, transient adjustment and three-band EQ to be found on every single drum or cymbal channel.

We are given full control of the volume, with three volume controllers on the face of the module for Master, Audio and Click. There are 14 trigger inputs, an aux-in and headphone input – and at the back of the module is an input for USB where we can load in our own samples or record direct to the USB.

As well as there being loads of creative and performing scope on the kit, there are some fantastic practice features at our disposal, including 10 training functions and 37 training songs, which are great fun to use! We particularly enjoyed the Rhythm Gate function, which gives each part of the kit a score on how exact it is with the metronome or song. It can also be set so that, for example, the snare cuts out each time it is out of sync with the metronome.

"THE STANDOUT FEATURE OF THE KIT IS THE NEW DTX PRO MODULE, WHICH YAMAHA DESCRIBE AS A 'NEXT GENERATION' SOUND MODULE."

They Say:

GAVIN THOMAS
DRUM PRODUCT MARKETING MANAGER, PRO MUSIC DIVISION, YAMAHA MUSIC EUROPE, GMBH (UK)

What was the motivation behind the new DTX6 range, and how do they differ to your existing models?
"The new DTX6 series replaces the DTX502 range. We have looked at all the elements that make up the range and improved all areas, with the new module being a standout. This DTX Pro module has a new approach for Yamaha in its user interface, which opens up a more engaging experience and maximises the control of all the sound possibilities."

A particular stand-out feature of the kit is the high definition and quality of the sounds.
"There have been a few studio sessions in development of these new sounds, one of which was in the UK at Real World Studios. We used professional drummers and the best engineers to gather the finest quality of sample recordings, including capturing the sound of the room for our Ambience Modifier. It is important to note that we have also used a new sound engine, amplifier and circuitry to maximise these new sounds for the player."

Yamaha DTX6K3-X Kit

The click track is also very useful with 30 different click sets, a number of different subdivisions and accent options, as well as the ability to easily change the metronome sound and tempo. Downloading the free Yamaha 'Rec N' Share' app enables the audio from the kit to be compatible with devices, providing easy options for recording rehearsals, demos, lessons and drum videos.

Hardware

Being the flagship within the new range, the DTX6K3-X features the Yamaha TCS (Textured Cellular Silicone) tom and snare pads. The silicon playing surface provides a comfortable playing experience and is relatively close to the attack of an acoustic drum. Another advantage of the TCS pad is that the sound generated from the pad is very quiet, making it ideal for home practice.

Each pad allows you to layer up to four sounds at the same time, so there are plenty of creative possibilities and sound stacking options here. The snare can be played using three different playing surfaces – head, rimshot or rim-click.

The KP90 kick tower is another highlight. It has a multilayer cushion head design that is fairly slack, absorbing the pedal comfortably. It feels like a real bass drum and doesn't cause that rather hard, bouncy feel from the pedal, which we've experienced with other kits. The noise from the pad is also very quiet compared with some other brands, again resulting in an ideal home-practice solution. The pad is 7½" in diameter, making the large playing surface ideal for a double pedal.

Cymbal-wise, the DTX6K3-X is equipped with three triple-zone 13" cymbal pads,

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1. Rack to the Future
A much sturdier rack system to previous designs. The sound module is now completely out of the way and over to the right.

2. Dialling up the Sound
The three sound modifiers give you a lot of control, meaning you don't have to deep-dive through several menus to adjust and tweak the sounds to your liking.

3. Silicone Valley
TCS (Textured Cellular Silicone) tom and snare pads provide a comfortable and fairly realistic playing experience.

4. Soft Touch
The KP100 kick tower is 7½" in diameter and has a multilayer cushion head design that absorbs the pedal comfortably.

5. Lucky Strikes
Hit-point detection on the ride cymbal allows you to get a brighter or darker sound depending on where you strike.

6. Sample This
A USB input at the back of the module enables the user to upload their own samples, which you can assign to any pad.

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Yamaha DTX6K3-X Kit

"IT IS CLEAR THAT A LOT OF CARE AND DETAIL HAS GONE INTO THE RECORDING OF THE DRUM SOUNDS, WHICH WERE RECORDED AT SOME OF THE BEST STUDIOS IN THE WORLD."

providing two crashes and a ride, plus there's the 13" hi-hat pad that mounts to a traditional hi-hat stand for an authentic setup and feel.

The hit-point detection on the ride cymbal is a new feature for Yamaha and allows you to change the sound depending on where the cymbal is struck – emulating to a degree the response from an acoustic cymbal. They respond well at different dynamic levels and can be choked in the usual way by grabbing the edge of the pad.

The newly designed RS6 rack system makes for a very sturdy playing experience. We really liked the fact that the sound module is out of the way and now over to the right, making the positioning for hi-hat stands and double pedals very convenient.

The Full Range

In the middle of the DTX6 range is the DTX6K2-X kit (£1,692). Here, you get many of the same features as the DTX6K3-X: three-zone, TCS snare pad, three-zone cymbal pads and KP90 kick drum pad, plus the RHH135 hi-hats. However, the tom pads are swapped for rubber pads.

The entry-level kit in the DTX6 range is the DTX6K-X (£1,128). This setup comes with one 10" crash cymbal pad (which is still choke-able), the same TCS snare/rubber tom pad configuration as the DTX6K2-X, and the hi-hats are a 10" pad controlled with a separate pedal.

CONTACT
www.uk.yamaha.com

Verdict

This is an impressive mid-range kit. A highlight is definitely the DTX Pro module, providing easy and accessible control over the sound and a number of useable functions for both creating and practising music.

Rhythm Rating

8/10

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Aston Microphones Element

Blind tests with industry pros and everyday users put this mic top of the pile against established brands four times this price

Words: **Mark Whitlam**

PRICE: £159

Aston have made a name for themselves over the past few years producing very reasonably priced mics whose performance rivals high-cost competitors. With the launch of the fixed-position cardioid Element, they have taken this to another level.

Having developed a completely new capsule design, Aston have managed to bring down production costs significantly without compromising on sound quality. Its sonic properties are described as having the low-end punch of a dynamic, the mid-range warmth of a ribbon and the higher-frequency precision of a condenser mic, hence the hybridised name 'Ridyon™' for the proprietary capsule.

Boasting a very flat frequency response, low noise-floor and high sound-pressure level (SPL) rating, we tried a pair of Elements in a few situations around the drums, with the first port of call being the bass drum.

Being a moving coil mic, it captures very fast transients and has plenty of punch for beater attack. We found the sweet spot for us was just inside the hole of the resonant head and slightly off-axis to the beater, where the balance of low end and attack blended well.

A/B'd against a pair of AKG C414 XLS II in an X-Y configuration as overheads, the Element captures plenty of mids, whilst the AKG produced a more open top end.

The Aston came into its own in the Glyn Johns positioning with that mid-range punch capturing the whole kit well in a rock situation, the snare smacking you (pleasingly) around the chops.

The final position was on the toms, and – wow! – this was where these guys absolutely shone! They capture both the attack of the stick along with heaps of mid and low frequencies, allowing the tone of toms to speak really openly.

The only slight challenge we faced at times was regarding ease of positioning (such as inside the bass drum) due to the fixing design of the proprietary shock mount, which doesn't allow the mic to rotate once it is attached.

That said, at this price and sonic performance, a little bit of extra mic stand tweaking can be taken on the chin.

1. **A Bundle of Fun**
The Element comes with a unique clip-on shock-mount and ingenious magnetic pop-shield, should you need to tame plosives.

2. **A Mic for the People**
Both everyday users and top industry producers helped finetune this mic in R&D, ultimately coming out top of the pile in their choices against the big guns.

3. **One-of-a-kind Design**
The unique grille and waveform-contoured chassis help avoid distortion of sound waves, directing them towards the capsule without affectation.

4. **Deep Purple**
The beautiful detail of the purple glowing logo shows the presence of the 48V phantom power required for this cardioid mic.

CONTACT
www.astonmics.com

Verdict

A highly capable and versatile mic that holds its own against much pricier competitors. A great choice for punchy rock situations and a go-to for toms, in particular.

Rhythm Rating

9/10

Mapex Saturn Evolution Kit

With many design updates, does this latest offering from Mapex run rings around the competition?

Words: **Mark Whitlam**

PRICE: £1,599

Whilst 2020 felt like *Groundhog Day* for many of us, Mapex was not standing still, having released the latest line of their Saturn series of drum kits, the Saturn Evolution.

As you would expect from the title, the company have taken strides forward with this version of the Saturn. It transpires those strides are more leaps in terms of developments – and there are many of them. Buckle up whilst we take this handsome instrument for a test drive.

Hybrid Woods and Hybrid Shell Sets

The original Saturn series offers a blend of maple and walnut drums, with the walnut originally forming the inner two plies of the shell. With the Evolution, this design has been tweaked by sandwiching the walnut between the maple outer layers. Placing the denser wood at the centre of the bearing edge gives the drums a darker and warmer tone. On top of this, the Evolution offers a birch and walnut combination too, giving you sonic options – however, the decisions don't end there.

Remember how Steve Gadd often favoured a maple bass drum with birch toms for years in the studio, prefering different sonic properties for each wood type? The Saturn Evolution can also be configured with the birch/walnut blend for toms, paired with a bass drum maple/walnut shell.

As we know, birch will offer a little more punch for the toms, whilst the softer maple wood will imbue the bass drum with warmer lower frequencies. This review kit sent to us from Korg UK is this latter hybrid shell combination.

Heavenly Design Concepts

Another brand-new concept from Mapex is the 'Halo' tom mounting system. There are two significant elements to this. Firstly, the mounting system meets the drum under the lug, as opposed to hooking around the tuning lugs and sitting between the lugs and the metal hoop. The thinking here is to increase resonance by allowing the drum to vibrate as freely as possible, which is great if you want a wide, open sound.

But what if you want to calm down that sustain, say, in a room where such ringing is problematic or the genre calls for more dry drum tones? Sure, we're all used to

They Say:

MARTIN POTTS
PRODUCT & ARTIST MANAGER, KORG UK

What was the motivation for Mapex to bring out the Evolution alongside the existing Saturn model?
"It's all about choice. The Saturn 2020 offers the player the classic Saturn sound with some new tweaks, whilst the Evolution kit brings in ground-breaking new features from the Design Lab project and introduces alternative wood blends to allow the drummer to shape their sound."

Are there other new and exciting products on the way from Mapex this year?
"2020 saw Mapex introduce 14 new models of Black Panther snares and 5 new Black Panther Design Lab Artist snares plus the 2 new Saturn kits, 2021 will be a quieter year for new releases, however, there's always something in the planning, and we've just released pictures of two beautiful new Armory finishes, which should start arriving in the UK towards the end of February, so watch this space."

Could you recommend one or two Mapex snares that you feel would complement the Saturn Evolution kit?
"Any of the new Black Panther snares will sit comfortably with the kits. My personal favourite, however, is the 14"x6" Predator with its 1.2mm copper shell."

"THE BIRCH/WALNUT SHELL GIVES US PLENTY OF OPEN PUNCH, AND THE NEWLY DESIGNED, SLIGHTLY FLATTENED 'SONICLEAR' BEARING EDGES GIVE THE TOMS REAL WARMTH."

throwing gels, o-rings and such on to the heads, but as an alternative approach, Mapex have come up with a revolutionary design built into the Halo mount.

There is a textured knob that, when turned, pushes a soft felt damper against the shell of the drum, thus attenuating its natural resonance. Mapex describe it as a "built-in equalizer", which seems a little misleading as it doesn't boost or attenuate particular frequencies so much as affecting the openness of the drum's decay. This is only present on the rack toms and does have some effect in practice, but it's rather subtle and when really tightened, gives the drum a slightly odd, choked feel when played, which might be challenging for some. It certainly isn't a replacement for standard dampening devices to reduce drum decay, but the effect might suit some players. To further avoid impeding natural resonance, Mapex have also been savvy in placing the vent holes at nodal points on the shells.

The Studio Test Drive

Whilst assembling the kit, the quality of construction of both woodwork and the hardware has an impressive quality for the mid-range price tag of this kit. The classy Gun Metal Grey matte finish looks ultra modern and is complemented by black brushed-metal hardware. The mounting hardware is very well engineered and rugged, which you'll be grateful for once we're out gigging again.

The kit we have been given to review is a 22"x16" maple/walnut 8-ply bass drum paired with birch/walnut blend 6-ply toms in 12"x8" and a 16"x16" floor tom.

The drums tune easily and seem happy at a range of tunings without choking up

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1. I Can See Your Halo
The under-lug Halo suspension mount affords the hanging tom plenty of resonance and still feels study when played hard.

2. Not Fifty Shades of Grey
The pairing of brushed black metal hardware and the sexy Gun Metal Grey finish provides a high-end look with a mid-range price tag.

3. Save Our Soles
A bit like your posh trainers, these clever air-cushioned floor tom feet help reduce vibrations to the ground, resulting in more sustain.

4. Beefy Bass/Aggressive Attack
The maple/walnut bass drum blend pairs low-end warmth with a serious amount of smack that will excite rock or metal players, in particular.

5. Make It Quicker and Tighter
The 'Adjustment Knob' on the tom mount presses a felt pad against the shell of the drum, said to reduce decay for a tighter sound.

6. Different Shell Pack Wood Configurations
You can choose between a maple/walnut or birch/walnut set of drums, or a hybrid set of maple/walnut bass drum and birch/walnut toms.

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18+

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Mapex Saturn Evolution kit

when cranked up high. Clearly, it's highly unlikely you'd be using these particular sizes on a jazz date, but it's good to know that the toms will speak consistently across a range of tensions.

By the Hammer of Thor!

Focusing on the bass drum to start with, the popular 16" depth of this 22"-diameter drum gives us the expectation that it will provide a meaty, rock-orientated sound. Indeed, it packs real punch, and, even with a standard felt beater, the attack is huge. Couple that with plenty of low end thanks to the maple/walnut shell, and you've got a modern kick ready to take on pop, rock, punk or metal duties with ease.

If you're looking for classic vintage bass drum sounds, this is not likely to be your first choice, but for power, projection and presence, it is a great option. Placing a dynamic mic by the beater, that powerful attack is face-melting. Moving the mic further out to the hole captures more of those maple-infused warm lows.

We also tried taking the front head off and micing off-axis by the edge of the outer shell. Here, it got even more thunderous low end, pairing well with the modern attack, reminding me of the sound Kenny Aronoff gets when hammering through rock tracks.

Power and Warmth

Moving to the birch/walnut toms, there is a noticeable tonal difference to that of the bass drum. Whilst the birch gives us plenty of open punch, those newly designed, slightly flattened 'SONIClear' bearing edges give the drums real warmth. I would not go as far as to say they have a vintage-sounding warmth, but they balance the initial attack well with a rounded tone.

These toms excel in more rock-orientated fills and grooves, giving clear and powerful punctuations. Mapex have done a good job here of pairing the different wood blends of the bass drum and toms to get a wide range of tonal variation but that still sit well together in a mix.

The floor tom has plenty of sustain – in no small part due to design of the legs. The air-suspension-style feet on the legs reduce the vibrations being dissipated through to the floor. Mapex have considered the principle that the more direct a route sound waves have, the easier they are transmitted. By disrupting this with a 90-degree kink in the leg design you reduce the loss of vibrations to the ground, giving you oodles of decay from this floor tom.

The added bonus here is it makes the floor tom super-sturdy when set up, as the foot print is relatively large compared to more standard 45-degree leg designs.

CONTACT
www.mapexdrums.com

Verdict

With its stylish looks, clever design and punchy tone, this is very much a modern kit suited to more heavy playing styles and is competitively priced for its build quality.

Rhythm Rating

8/10

1. Stick Control
The menu system is navigated by striking buttons with the sticks.

2. The Light Fantastic
Reflective sensors allow the camera to track motion and transform it into sound.

3. In the Air Tonight
Kit positioning can be customised by simply striking the area each drum should be placed.

4. Backpacking
The Aerodrums kit will easily fit in a backpack, making it a legitimate portable practice solution.

5. Thinking Outside the Box
The out-of-the-box experience is not the best, but once we spent some time acquainting ourselves with the software, things just kept getting better.

6. Oculus 'Riff'
Aesthetically, the software is relatively basic, but the 3D and VR mode is looking like a game changer.

Aerodrums

Air drumming just got an upgrade

Words: **Tom Bradley**

PRICE: £155

It's not every day that we start a review by watching the product in question feature on *Dragon's Den*. In the case of Aerodrums and its creators Yann Morvan and Richard Lee, that's exactly what we're doing. Fast-forward five years, and the team at Aerodrums are still paving a unique path into a brand-new concept in electronic drumming.

Before we go any further, though, we need to address the elephant in the room. Aerodrums are not, and I repeat, not a toy. Despite the potential to be perceived in this way, the company are keen to remind the drumming community that there's actually an incredible amount of technology involved under the hood, and that in reality the product is designed as a portable solution for practice, or as an affordable option for beginners.

That said, there is certainly the potential to bring wider audiences to drumming, which is always a good thing.

Aerodrums work by using light sensors to track movement via a high-speed camera plugged into your computer. The £155 kit includes a pair of sticks (complete with light reflective ball tips), sensors that strap to the feet called foot markers, a USB camera (which some may recognise as a PlayStation 3 camera), a proprietary USB-powered lamp that fits to the camera helping to illuminate the sensors, some paper sunglasses (to fend off the glare from said lamp, which is surprisingly bright!) and finally, a license code for the Aerodrums software. Also found is a spare pair of reflective balls and some glue in the pack for use with our own choice of sticks. It's worth noting that we're using the camera stand available as an optional add-on for £39.

Once we've finished following the setup guide on the software, we're presented with a short list of kit presets that are as follows: Small Jazz Kit, Big Jazz Kit, Small Rock Kit, Big Rock Kit and Percussion Kit.

First impressions are that the sounds are generally excellent. After tinkering with the panning settings and dialling in some reverb, the drums sound truly fantastic. There are a total of just 32 individual sound elements, which isn't loads, but custom samples can also be imported.

In addition, Aerodrums are also capable of sending MIDI data to an external source – actually including preset MIDI maps for Garage Band, Logic, Steven Slate Drums, Superior Drummer and more. On top of all that, it's also possible to record directly within the software and export as multitrack .wav files.

"AFTER TINKERING WITH THE PANNING SETTINGS AND DIALLING IN SOME REVERB, THE DRUMS ARE SOUNDING TRULY FANTASTIC."

The burning question here though, is: How do they play? To which the initial answer is, not particularly well. Using the presets alone it is not possible to move the virtual location of each drum or cymbal, resulting in sporadic kit positioning. Fine if you like your hi-hats over your left shoulder and your snare somewhere between your shins...

Where the magic really happens is in the creation of a new kit (existing presets can also be cloned and edited as new kits). When loading a custom kit for the first time, the software asks to simply strike the area where each drum or cymbal should be positioned. There's no limit to how many elements of the kit you can pack in, although we found the busier it gets, the more chances there are of mis-hits. As a result, some of the most rewarding experiences on the Aerodrums were playing smaller setups.

The Percussion Kit was particularly awesome with its 14" Bop kick, 10" Piccolo snare, multiple splashes, tambourine and cowbell. While you're honing your air-drumming skills, thankfully, there are a few options that can be tweaked in the settings to help reduce the chance of mis-hits. The most common culprit seems to be catching the rack tom when expecting the snare. We found that spreading the position of the drums out slightly goes a long way to increasing accuracy.

To further dial in a satisfying playing experience, there are sensitivity and mixer options for each kit, in addition to settings for how much the hi-hats open when you lift your foot. Taking the sensitivity down across the board allows easier access to a surprisingly staggering dynamic range.

With the camera having no way of sensing the angle of the sticks, rimshots are triggered by velocity alone, which, given the up to 50 velocity layers, actually feels fairly seamless from a whisper quiet ghost note to the crack of a rimshot. From that standpoint, it's like playing a top-of-the-line electronic kit except there's nothing in front of you.

We're honestly blown away with how much we've enjoyed our Aerodrums experience, but we'd like to see some extra development in making the interface more user friendly as it can at times be clunky. The 3D beta version is incredibly promising, however, and we're gutted we don't have a VR headset for a fully immersive experience.

CONTACT

www.aerodrums.com

Verdict

When practice pads and pillows just won't cut it, Aerodrums could be the answer. An intriguing silent practice solution that needs seeing to be believed.

Rhythm Rating

7/10

Paiste Color Sound 900 Series Red box-set cymbals

Brightening these dull times is Paiste's latest incarnation in a long-running on-off fascination with colour-coated cymbals

Words: **Geoff Nicholls**

PRICE: £569

Paiste are no strangers to coloured cymbals, with 1984's Color Sound 5 in red, black, blue and green originally rustled up in response to the newly arrived MTV era. The 5s lasted only a couple of years, but Paiste has offered the possibility of colouring its cymbals by special order since then, if you're plucky enough. Other series have also appeared occasionally – like the black Visions, inspired by Terry Bozzio (1994-1999) and Joey Jordison's Black Alphas (2008-2014).

This time around (well, actually since 2017), Paiste decided to offer its CuSn8 alloy '2002 Bronze' 900 Series in normal and coloured versions. The 900 Series is a 10% cheaper follow-on to the longstanding – now honorably retired – Alphas, the original decent budget B8 cymbals. Paiste maintains, however, that the 900 is a unique development in sound and appearance, "offering pro-level cymbals in a mid-level price range". They involve a hybrid manufacturing process unique to the series, with a slightly darker finish, hand hammered and lathed.

Build

The 900 Color Sound range is extensive, encompassing crashes, rides, hats, splashes and Chinas – this time available in red, blue, purple or black. They are mostly sold separately, so you can make up a jellybean set, or just mix a couple of colours (the different colours are all the same price).

Additionally, there are a half dozen boxed sets in odd, even or extra-large (XL) diameters, and in either medium or heavy weights. Boxes work out around 10% to 13% cheaper than buying each cymbal individually.

For review, we have a Color Sound Red box-set containing even-sized 14" hi-hats, 16" and 18" crashes and a 20" ride. They are all medium weight, and while the crashes and rides are red top and bottom, the hi-hats are only red on the outer-sides. Underneath each cymbal there's a small Paiste logo with a serial number and 'Made In Switzerland' stamp.

Following decades of development, Paiste reckons the colour coating is guaranteed not to scratch, crack or chip. And as with the hybrid manufacturing process, the coating formulation is a proprietary secret, so not much more can be told. But it seems quite thinly sprayed on, so that the red colour here is translucent and luminous. Nonetheless, it gives the cymbals a slightly plastic, stiff feel and partially smooths out the lathing and hammering.

Sound

Visually, they're a blast, but how much does the sound suffer? Well, let's get real: you can't expect to slosh a coloured coating over a mid-priced CuSn8 cymbal and get a fabulously airy, sizzling, mega-resonant whoosh. Color Sounds are primarily offered up for their visual élan rather than their sonic brilliance.

So, while Paiste maintains the colour coating reduces the resonance by a small amount, common sense says pull the other one. Where it notices and matters most is with the crashes. These two (16" and 18") are both obviously hampered in their response. I don't have any standard 900s for comparison, but I do have an early Alpha 18" crash that is an excellent mid-price cymbal. A shining beacon of Paiste's ground-breaking budget work when most other B8s sounded like a hubcap dropped onto an anvil. Bash that next to the Color Sound 18" and the difference is undeniable. The sparkle is reduced, the tail-off inhibited.

"THE VERY COATING THAT CURBS THE CRASHES, TIGHTENS UP AND CLARIFIES THE 20" MEDIUM RIDE. STICK RESPONSE IS CLICKY AND RATHER DARK IN AN ATTRACTIVE, FOCUSED MANNER."

1. **Lathed and Hammered**
All the cymbals have lathing lines and hammering dimples visible on both top and underside surfaces.
2. **Red is the Colour**
Our review set cymbals have a rich, translucent, luminous red colour coating with Paiste Color Sound 900 logos in white.
3. **Legendary Bronze**
All 900 Series cymbals are forged from Paiste's famed 2002 CuSn8 bronze alloy, using a unique hybrid manufacturing process.
4. **Chip and Peel**
The tough and durable coloured coatings are guaranteed not to chip, crack or peel.
5. **Coated in Mystery**
Color Sounds have a somewhat muted, dark and warm tone due to the application of the proprietary coating.
6. **Choose and Colour**
The 900s Color Sounds are available in black, red, blue or purple, singly and in sets.

Yet importantly, the tone remains warm and smooth.

When it comes to the ride and hats, it's a different story. The very coating that curbs the crashes, tightens up and clarifies the 20" Medium ride. Stick response is clicky and rather dark in an attractive, focused manner. Added to which, the bell is sharp, pingy and clean, providing a distinct, driving pulse. It's no coincidence that some of Paiste's expensive Artist Signature rides include partially coloured finishes. Tightened focus is what many seek in a ride.

Turning to the 14" Medium hi-hats, the coating annuls some of the top frequencies, again making the cymbals darker. They're especially deep when you shoulder-crash them or side-swipe them. You get a throaty, duskily fat 'shoop' that feels like you have digitally dropped the pitch a couple of notches on your e-cymbals.

Not expecting this, I'm undecided about how much it appeals. But bearing in mind there are drummers who embrace 16" or even 18" hats simply because the low-pitched ticky timbre gets right out of the way of vocalists and guitarists, these are definitely worth checking out.

Having mentioned e-cymbals, I do think we should not get too prissy about these Color Sounds. It's easy to be a cymbal snob and forget how wide-ranging cymbal uses are. Practice kits, e-kits, miming, YouTube, TV, etc. These also all come to mind because Color Sounds are uniquely subdued and controlled and focused.

CONTACT
www.paiste.com

Verdict

No one would claim Color Sounds are Paiste's finest, most subtle of platters, but that misses the point. What they are is fun: a vivid and affordable alternative from an innovative company.

Rhythm Rating

6/10

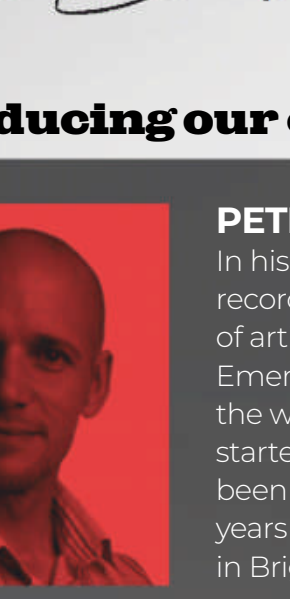
Beats working

Every drummer needs Rhythm. Exclusive lessons from our expert team...

Welcome to Beats Working, the part of the magazine aimed at helping drummers of all abilities to develop and progress. Kicking things off this issue, Colin, Erik and I are looking at some different aspects of jazz drumming, including groupings, independence and soloing in 'Getting Started', 'Creative Concepts' and 'Technical Difficulties', respectively.

Next, in 'Four-Piece Fills', Jason Bowld explores linear triplets to spice up your vocabulary, while in 'Percussion Toolkit' all-round percussion guru Pete Lockett continues his look at the humble triangle, with some essential patterns that can be used to add sparkle and life to any drum track.

Rounding out the tuition section is Tom Bradley, with his beginner's hybrid column, and Mike Sturgis, who shares some much-needed wisdom on how to survive (and hopefully thrive) in today's challenging environment.



Pete Riley, Beats Working Editor

Introducing our expert tutors (and what it is that's got them excited recently).

PETE RILEY

In his 35 years of playing, Pete has recorded and toured with a wide range of artists from Guthrie Govan to Keith Emerson (ELP). He's also been active in the world of education for many years, started writing for *Rhythm* in '93, has been teaching at ACM for some 21 years and more recently at WaterBear in Brighton.

WHAT HAS GOT YOU EXCITED RECENTLY?

"Todd Sucherman recently posted a video of Steve Smith playing a Zildjian event in 1983. The playing is, of course, amazing, but it also sounds contemporary despite being nearly 40 years old!"

ERIK STAMS

Born and raised in NYC, Erik has over 20 years of performing, recording, television, film and teaching experience. He's performed and recorded with artists including Jamie Lawson, Zervas and Pepper, Butch Thomas, Jon Langford, The Glyndebourne Touring Opera and The Darling Buds. He is head of drums at BIMM London.

WHAT HAS GOT YOU EXCITED RECENTLY?

"For me, it was the Ash Soan *Zildjian Live* session that was released last year. Musical, authoritative and playful – and absolutely smokin'."

JASON BOWLD

Jase has been the drummer for Welsh rock/metal titans Bullet For My Valentine since 2015. He began drumming aged 12 and turned professional at 21. He joined UK industrial legends Pitchshifter from 1999 to 2007, during which time his session drumming career took shape. He's played with Killing Joke, Pop Will Eat Itself, Fightstar and even Bill Bailey.

WHAT HAS GOT YOU EXCITED RECENTLY?

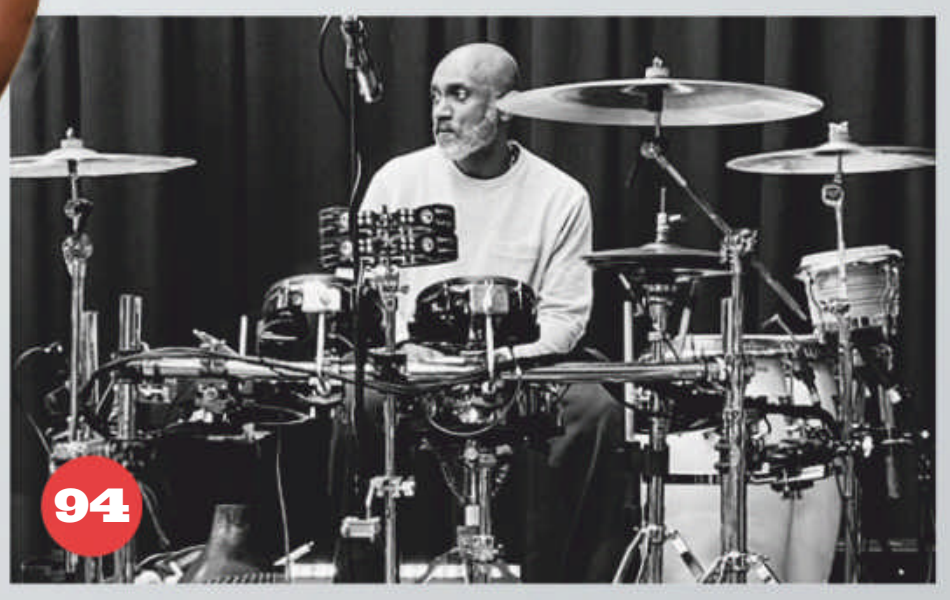
"The Pearl e/MERGE kit is one of the most realistic e-kits I've played recently – which says a lot coming from an old school drummer such as myself!"

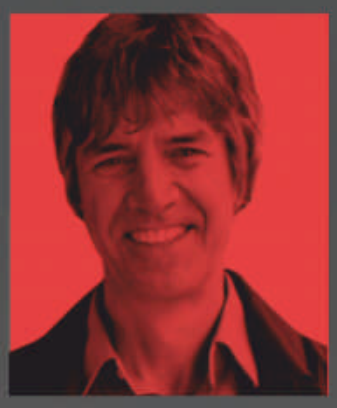
PETE LOCKETT

Pete is one of the most versatile multi-percussionists on the planet and has played a dizzying range of instruments with artists including Björk, Peter Gabriel, Robert Plant, Michael Nyman, and the Pet Shop Boys; and on a plethora of Hollywood films. He continues to tour worldwide as a soloist, collaborator and educator.

WHAT HAS GOT YOU EXCITED RECENTLY?

"I have focused almost entirely on the internal since the autumn. It's proving to be a very rewarding experience, writing and composing a lot and working on some percussion techniques that make me feel like a beginner again."





MIKE STURGIS

A 15-year veteran of writing for *Rhythm* magazine, Mike has appeared live and on record with artists including A-ha, Steve Winwood, Jack Bruce, David Bowie, Elton John, Tom Jones, Bob James, Asia, Beverly Knight and many more. He plays with Redtenbacher's Funkestra and The Staks and is head of education for DIME Online.

WHAT HAS GOT YOU EXCITED RECENTLY?

"I've really been enjoying the Nate Smith Zildjian Artist in Residence Concert at Berklee School of Music. Incredible groove, endlessly creative, great band and thoughtful compositions. Highly recommended!""

COLIN WOOLWAY

Colin has been playing and teaching drums professionally since 1976. He has done every kind of gig including eight years with rock icon Suzi Quatro. He is the founder of the Drumsense teaching programme and has written for *Rhythm* for over 20 years! Colin teaches at studios in Twickenham, The Brit School and ELAM.

WHAT HAS GOT YOU EXCITED RECENTLY?

"Two things that I spotted online recently are the Adoro Silent Sticks that cut volume by 50% – very handy for practising and cheering up the neighbours, and the Magnobuddy Brush Holder looks brilliant!"

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For the featured tuition videos go to www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

Getting Started

Colin Woolway gets you warmed up with some exercises on triplets in groups of four

Welcome to another 'Getting Started' drum lesson from me, this time focusing on triplets played in groups of four.

Triplets by their very nature, are in groups of three, but if you subdivide them into even numbers you can get some interesting results. Eighth-note triplets count for 12 notes in a bar of 4/4, which means you can divide them into three groups of four. We'll play in jazz feel to best illustrate how this works.

Ex 1 shows a run of eighth-note triplets with four notes played on the snare drum, high tom and low tom.

Ex 2 shows the triplets broken up by accenting the first out of each four on a tom, and obviously this time I'm able to include the mid tom.

Ex 3 moves the accents onto cymbals – this could be crash cymbals or the ride cymbal. Experiment with tones. Notice the bass drum is playing three even notes throughout the bar – these are minim, or 'half-note' triplets.

For your Practice Challenge, try playing these groups of four as paradiddles, and move the accents around the kit, snare, toms and cymbals.

If you only play one bar and begin with your right hand, as written, you will come out on your left hand.

For Colin's video lesson go to www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

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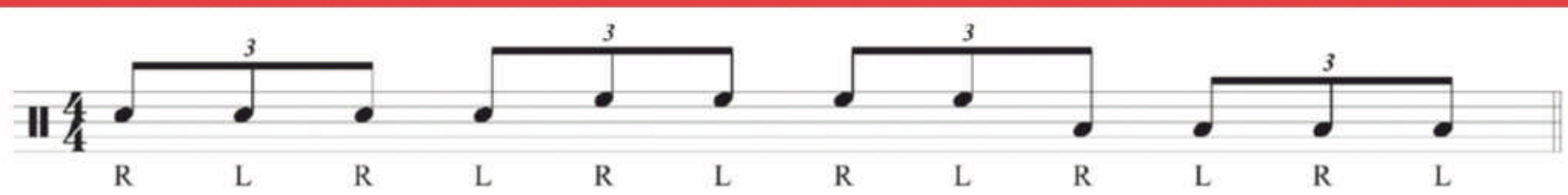
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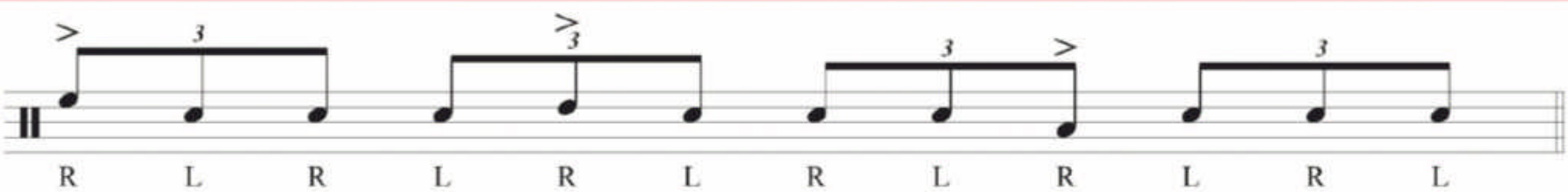
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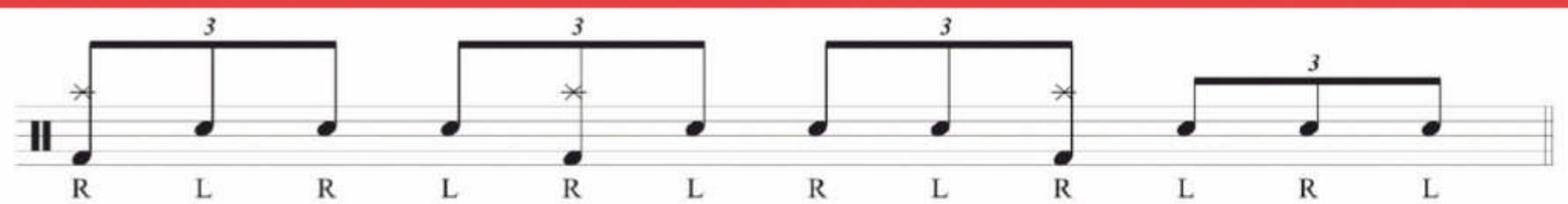
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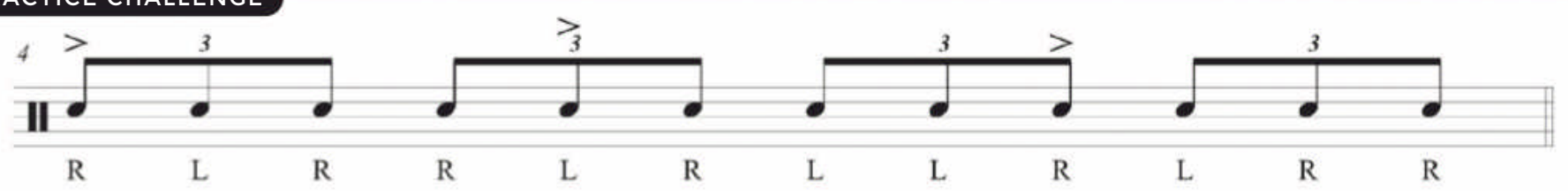
Creative Concepts

Get jazzy with **Erik Stams** as he explores melodic interplay

Melodic interplay is the use of the various voices of the drum kit to create melodic rhythms in our timekeeping, comping and soloing. This lesson focuses on a simple-but-effective practice concept designed to develop the coordination to articulate phrases melodically on the drum kit.

The act of phrasing on the snare drum and bass drum against the traditional jazz ride and hi-hat pattern is often referred to as 'comping', derived from 'complement' or 'accompaniment'.

Comping is how musicians (particularly drums, piano and guitar) frame, react to and embellish the melody of a song/soloist. Listen to drummers such as Art Blakey, Bill Stewart, Elvin Jones, Peter Erskine and Brian Blade to hear this in action.

The exercises below will help build up the coordination to comp freely and melodically and to become adept at interpretation. Think of it as a conversation between the snare and bass drum.

Ex 1 illustrates the traditional jazz ride and hi-hat pattern – this will be your *ostinato* for the rest of the exercises to be played against. Interpret all eighth notes as 'swung' eighths (triplet feel), and interpret all of the exercises below in the following manner:

2 bars snare / 2 bars bass drum
1 bar snare / 1 bar bass drum
2 beats each
1 beat each
One note each (eighths)
Reverse melody (bass drum first)

Ex 2 shows quarter notes. Ex 3 shows the off-beat eighth notes ('swung'). Ex 4 shows constant eighths. 100bpm is a good starting tempo.

Once you've gone through the previous melodic exercises, try interpreting Ex 4 using the notated paradiddle snare drum sticking patterns between the bass drum (R) and snare drum (L). Maintain a degree of stylistic and dynamic awareness throughout by playing the snare softly and 'feathering' the bass drum.

Further study: explore using the middle note of the triplet and triplet partials (check out my video on the *Rhythm* YouTube channel).

Heads Up

Ostinato – a repeating rhythmic figure

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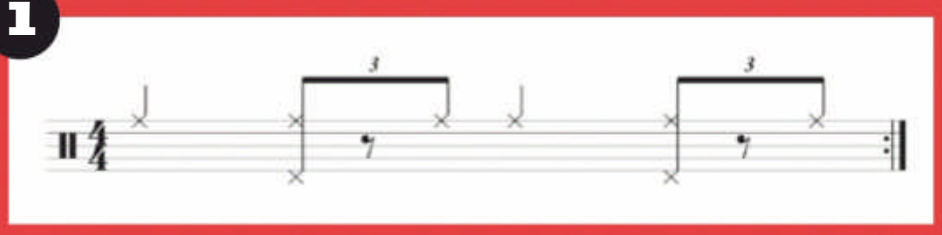
The traditional jazz ride and hi-hat pattern.

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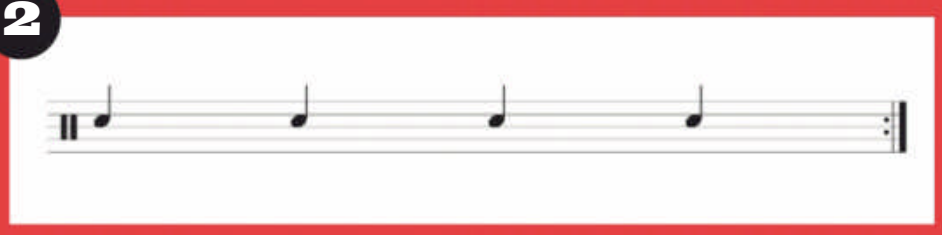
Quarter-note comping pattern (snare drum and/or bass drum).

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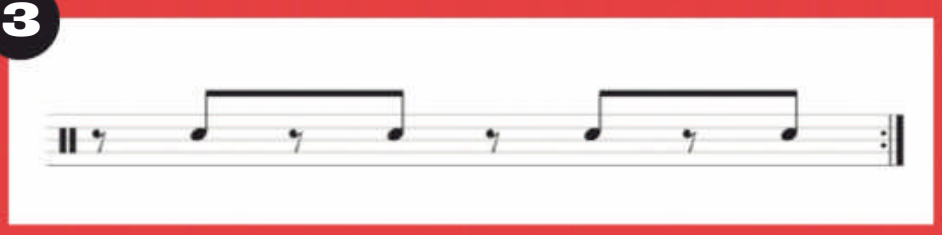
Off-beat eighth notes (swung, snare drum and/or bass drum).

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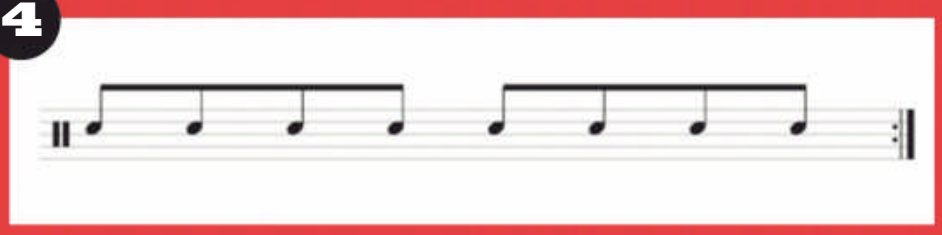

Eighth notes (swung, snare drum and/or bass drum) – interpret using the notated sticking patterns as well.

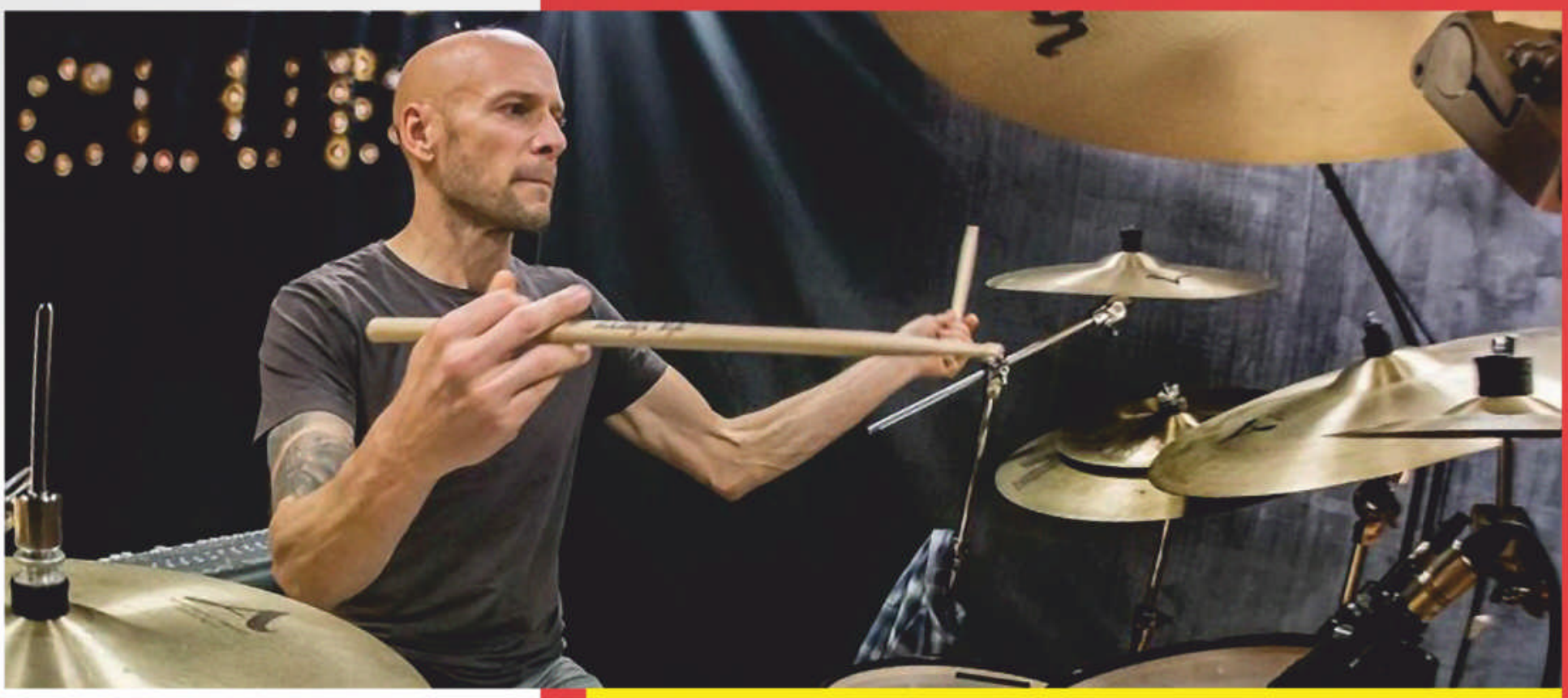
5

F	L	F	F	L	F	L	L
F	F	L	F	L	L	F	L
F	L	L	F	L	F	F	L
F	L	F	L	L	F	L	F

For Erik's video lesson go to
www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

Technical Difficulties

Pete Riley adds some interesting phrasings to your swing solo vocabulary



Jazz drummers are often afforded the opportunity to solo, perhaps trading 4s (four-bar phrases) with the band or sometimes soloing over the form of the piece. Either situation can expose a drummer who's less experienced at soloing or is less comfortable soloing in a 'swung' eighth or eighth-note triplet subdivision.

Here, we'll continue this Beats Working's jazz drumming theme by addressing this with some swing solo vocabulary.

When we first begin playing fills or attempting to solo, it's often based around the use of single strokes, usually 16th notes, perhaps starting on the snare and then moving down the toms. On a jazz drummer's four-piece kit, this immediately presents an issue as the one-up, one-down tom configuration doesn't really lend itself to this – but also the way that single strokes move hand to hand in triplets can make moving around the kit a challenge.

Jazz drummers avoid this issue in several different ways: by using stickings, perhaps allowing only the right hand to move around the kit, incorporating the bass drum into phrases or by adding rests to break up the time and the constant flow of notes.

The two-bar examples here utilise some of these concepts, with the idea being that they're interchangeable and can be added together to create four-bar (or longer) phrases. Among them, you'll find some three-beat ideas, hand/foot linear figures and the classic jazz stick-on-stick sound. All of which, with the inclusion of a stepped left foot on 2 and 4, should offer some practical ideas for your next solo opportunity, swing or otherwise.

For Pete's video lesson go to
www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

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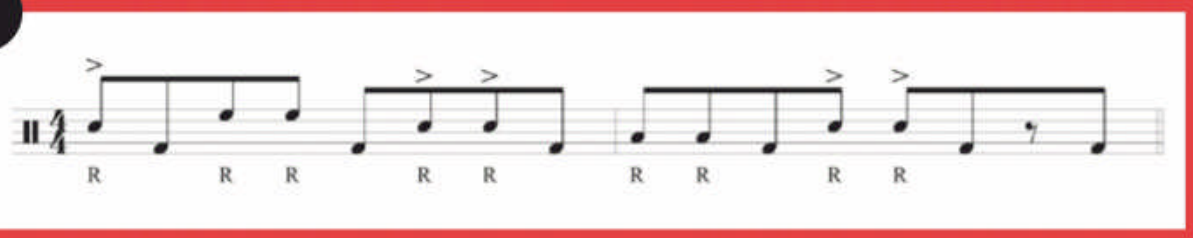
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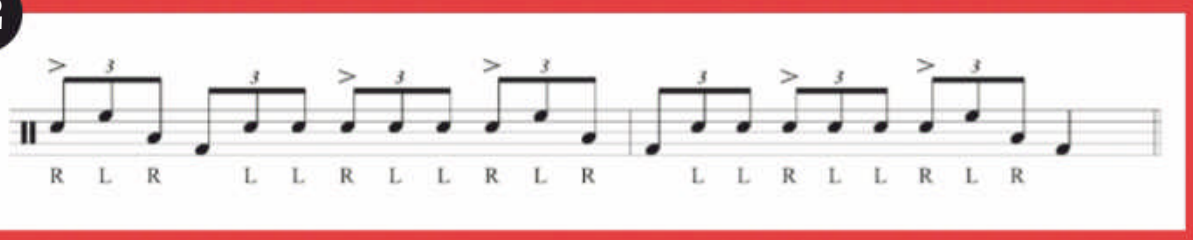
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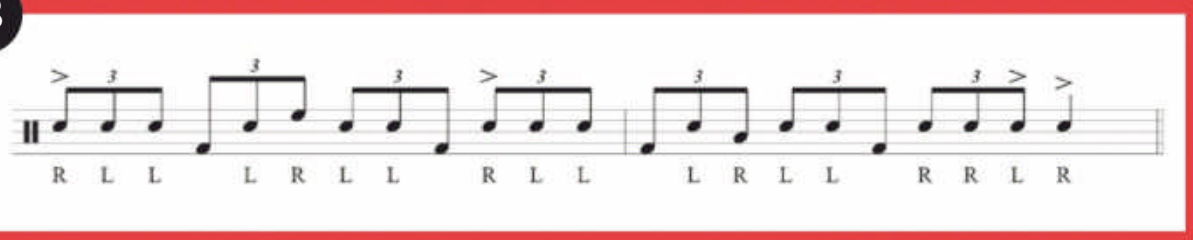
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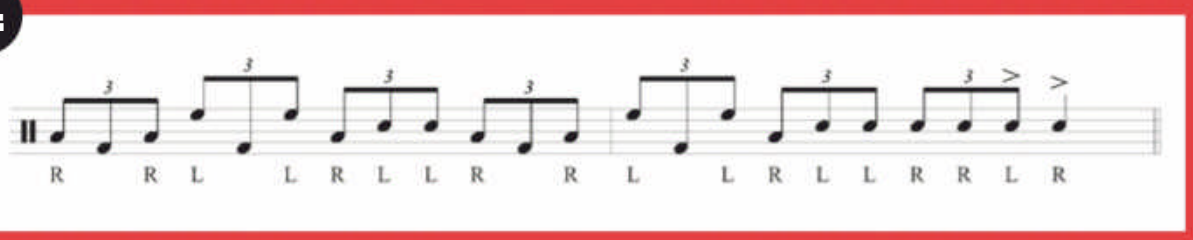

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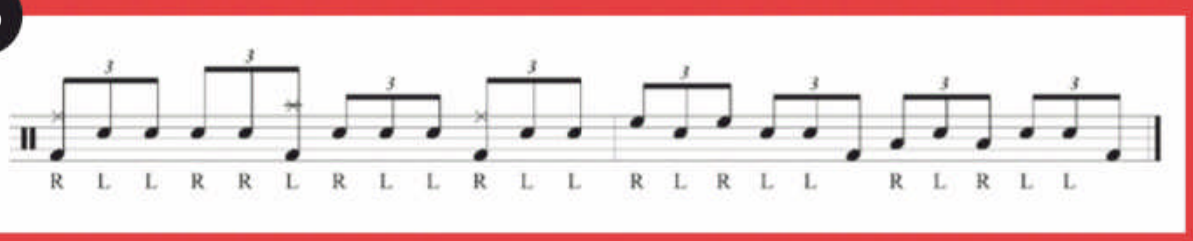
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Four-Piece Fills

Learn to create linear triplet fills with odd groupings, **Jason Bowld** as your guide

Image: Ryan Chang

For Jason's video lesson go to
www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

Last issue was all about sixes and this issue is all about sevens... and sixes! Confused? Well, Ex 1 should clarify things.

This preliminary exercise shows three groups of seven played as 16th-note triplets. A bar of 7/8 is used to create a neat, seamless loop, and it's crucial to acknowledge the sticking and linear feel at this stage. This is now the blueprint for some dynamic, powerful four-piece fills to be played in the following examples, which are all preceded by the same simple groove.

Ex 2 shows the sevens used halfway through bar two – and rather than them being played as a system, various beats are accented to create dynamics and feel.

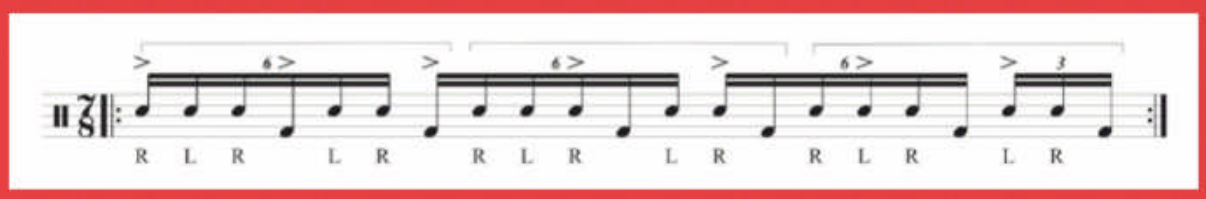
Ex 3 shows a longer fill that starts on beat 2 of bar two. The orchestration has become more colourful now with the inclusion of the hi-hat played on various beats, which creates some interesting arm manoeuvres.

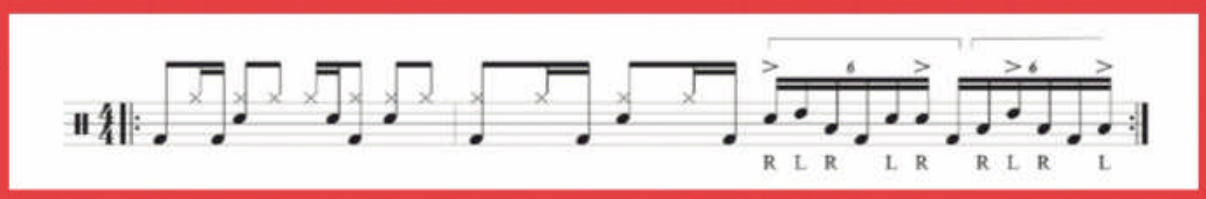
Finishing up with Ex 4, this fill takes up the whole of bar two, but starts a 16th-note triplet later to create a different feel. The orchestration remains varied with more hi-hats added with the toms, kick and snare to further enhance the four-piece fill concept.

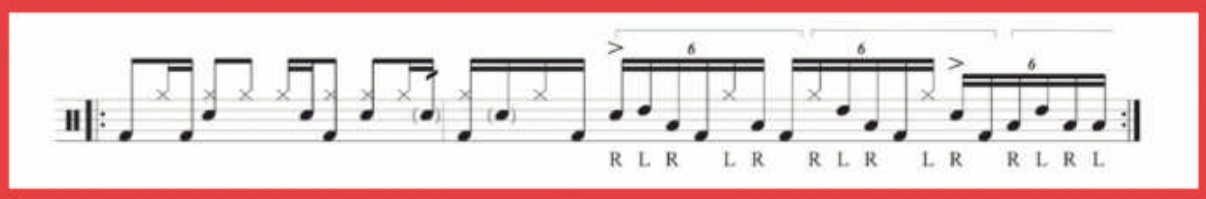
Heads up

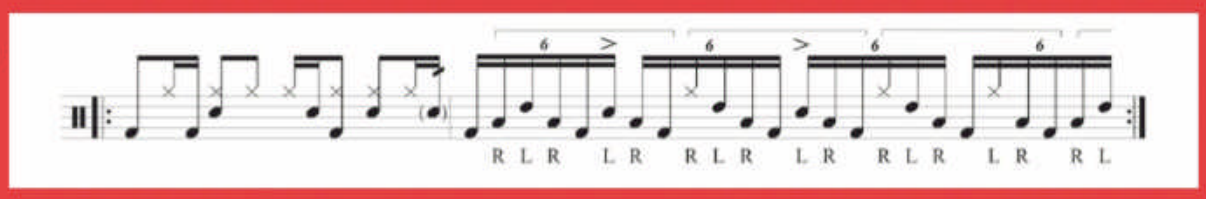
System

When using a system (in Ex 1) as a blueprint for fills, it's very important to humanise it with well-placed accents and creative orchestration so it sounds musical and not clinical.

1

The blueprint for chaos! Pay close attention to the sticking here, and note that each hand fragment starts with alternate hands. This will help create more colour and chaos when orchestrated around the kit. The accents are optional and help to feel the triplets through the groups of seven.

2

Here, accents and movement around the kit are combined with the sevens to create a musical and powerful fill on beat 3 in bar two. The phrasing brackets show that a full and partial group of seven is used.

3

Getting more complex now with a longer fill that uses two full groups of seven. Hi-hats are added in the middle of the fill, which forces a ninja-like crossover when playing hi-hat to mid tom, then open-handed for hi-hat to snare.

4

Now the full bar is used for a fill that has three full groups of seven. The slight displacement of this gives it a different feel and sound along with the different hi-hat placements. As an optional extra, you can try to play the hi-hat pedal with the kick drum that also combines well with the hi-hat hits.

Percussion Toolbox

Pete Lockett takes the triangle to the next level in Part 2, looking at the myriad ways of creating different tones and pitches

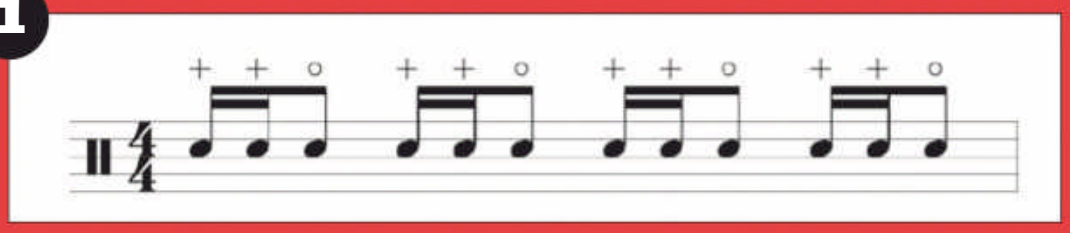
Just 'COS' it's a triangle doesn't mean we are not being deadly serious. Besides its impressive provenance and diverse use, it is a tricky little instrument to get accurate on. I have found it invaluable in recording sessions and film music, and it remains a 'must take' instrument for all my solo work and collaborations.

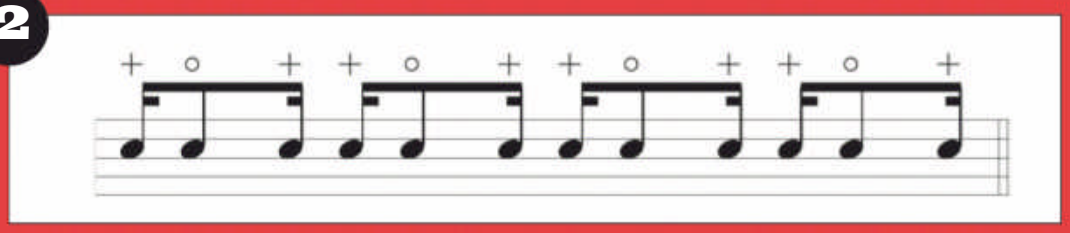
We can also get a lot of variety by considering different sized triangles, different metal and different thickness beaters to create completely different tones. Amongst my favourite is to use an aluminium triangle with a very thin beater made from strips of thin wire bound together. You can even make these beaters from strips of wire coat hangers – get a metal worker to make these for you so they don't have sharp ends.

One thing to consider when choosing a triangle is that they can be very conspicuous and with a definite pitch and tone. This can sometimes clash with the music, which is why it is always a good idea to have a few to choose from in every musical scenario.

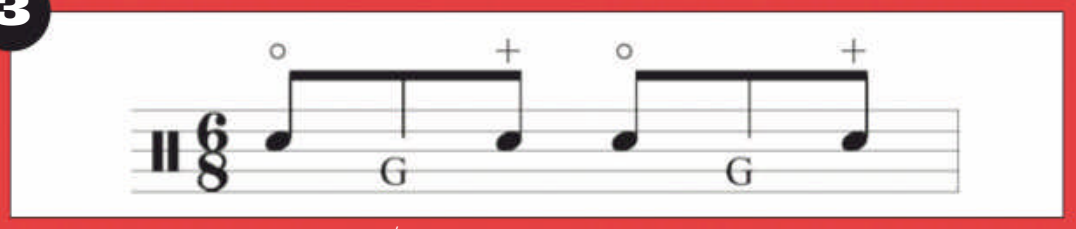
Now onto the technique. Last time, we looked at the open and muted tones, along with the holding position and beating method. Let's continue with a few simple 16th-note patterns to refresh our memory.

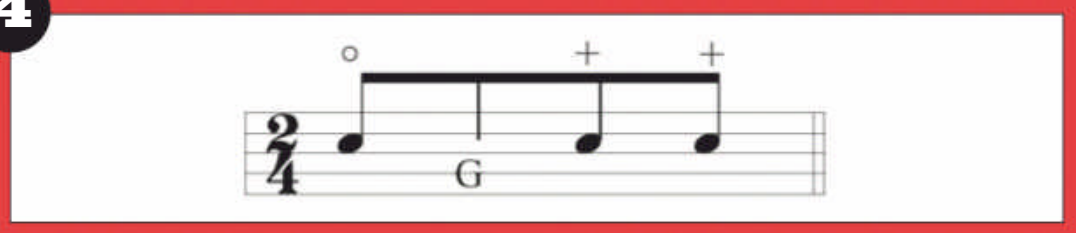
For Pete's video lesson go to www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

1

One thing to consider is where on the side of the triangle we strike to make the tone. We have found so far that striking roughly in the middle of the side, slightly up towards the holding hand, creates a fine tone. However, make sure you experiment and see what different tones are available, all the way from the holding hand corner down to the bottom corner. Certain musical scenarios may require different tones and different volume. Experimenting with different sized beaters also helps diversify your options.

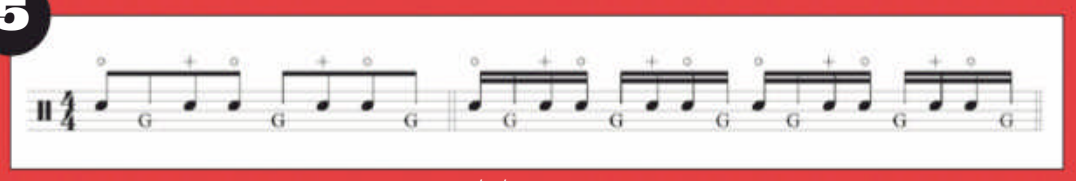
2

So far, we have muted the triangle and hit a closed tone simultaneously. If we have 'open closed closed closed' as a sequence, we would be grabbing the instrument 'closed' on the second note of this sequence, i.e., the first closed tone (like closing the hi-hat and hitting it at the same time with a stick).

We can however, create another interesting effect by thinking of the grab as a note and stroke in its own right. In this case, when we close the open tone, we only grab the instrument closed with the holding hand fingers – we do not simultaneously strike as well. See Ex 3 for this demonstrated over a simple 3/8 pattern: 'open closed muted'.

3

Next, in Ex 4, over a simple 4/8 pattern.

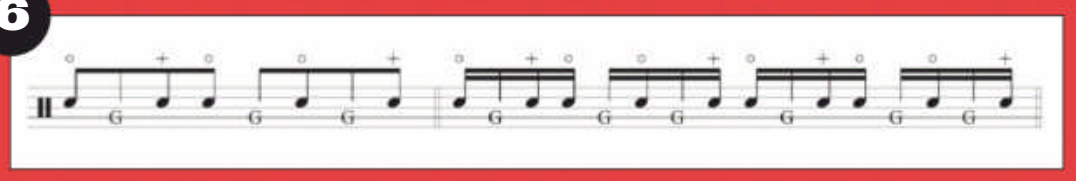
4

Then in Ex 5, we combine these into a simple 3/3/2 pattern in 4/4.

5



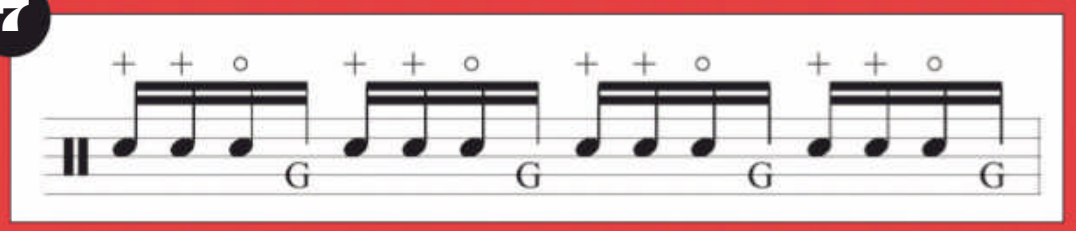
This could then be rearranged as 3/2/3.

6



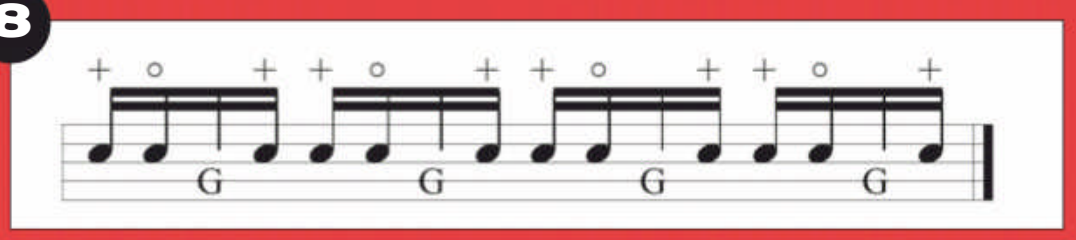
This can be really effective in faster 16th-note patterns. At a faster tempo, this can also be really useful technically because you do not have to play all the beaten notes continuously with the beater.

7



If you look closely, you will see that Ex 7 is a slightly amended version of Ex 1 from this article. In Ex 1, we let the open tone ring for a full eighth note until it was closed. In Ex 7 however, we closed the open tone on the fourth 16th-note of each unit. Same deal with Ex 8. This is the same base as Ex 2.

8



The triangle is a deceptively simple instrument. When looked at in reality, a lot of people would shy away from backing their dismissive words with some action on the instrument. It yields an incredibly bright and piercing sound with a lot of extremely staccato detail for the closed notes. Even the most fragile of rhythmic inaccuracies with this instrument stands out like a Cornish pasty in custard. Simple request for all the 'troll' merchants out there: please upload a video of your triangle virtuosity before you try and burn some poor triangle player with inappropriate humour! Ting Ting.

MORE TRIANGLES

There are numerous other interesting instruments to use triangle technique on. Trilok Gurtu has always utilised clock chimes to great effect – affording a lot of melodic opportunities on the various bars and spirals. There are also things like the liquid triangle and other hanging metallic metal devices part-filled with water, and let's not forget the great range of coil chimes and aluminium spiral triangles that have various pitches and tones on the different layers of the spiral. Even a waterphone can be played in a vaguely similar way by muting and un-muting the metal bars. At a push, you can even use this technique on cymbals and bells. Not all of these instruments can be held in the same way as the triangle, but the principle of open and closed, muted and resonant metal, remains very similar.

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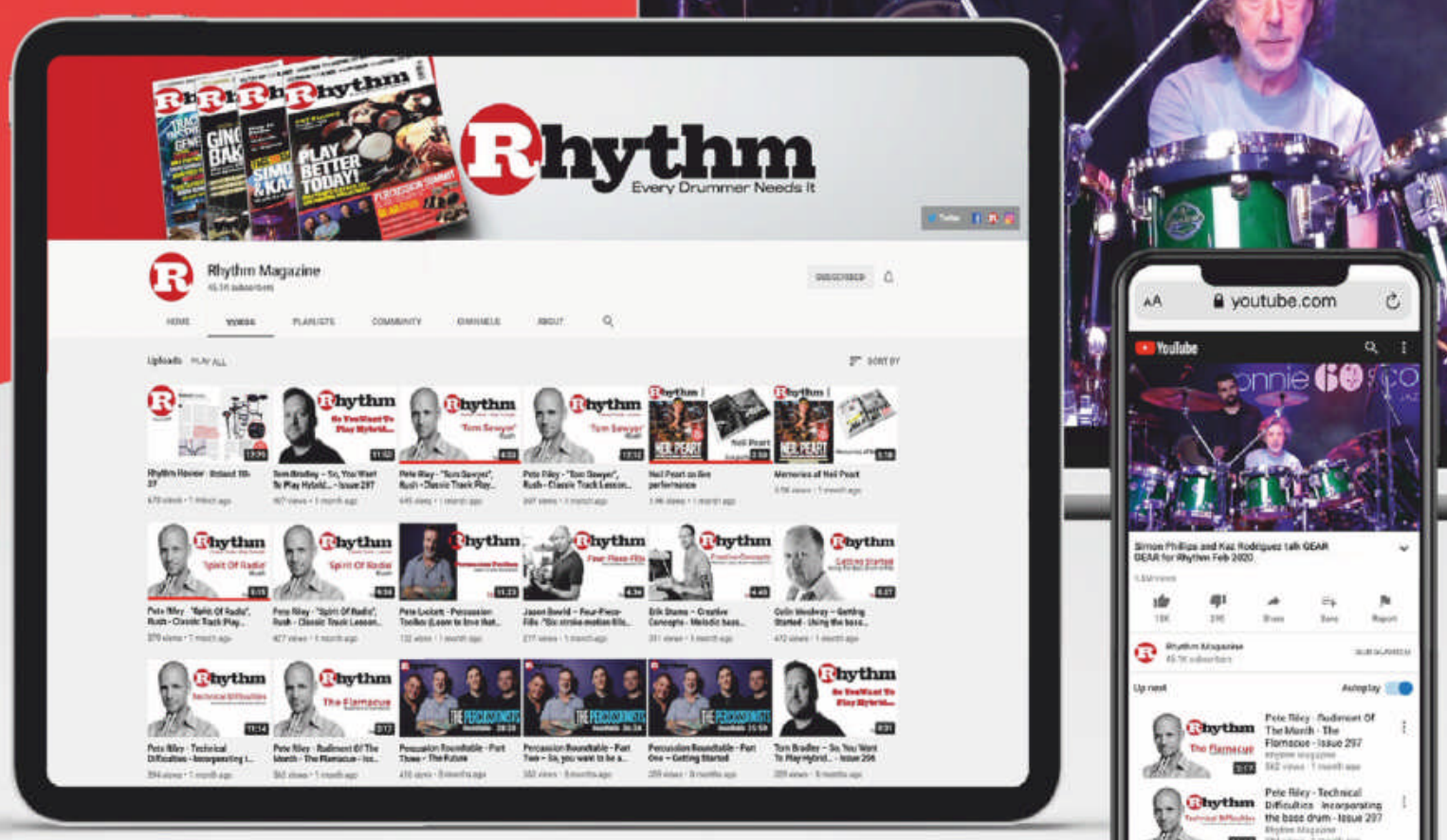

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So, You Want to Play Hybrid?

Unlock new sonic possibilities by adding effects says **Tom Bradley**

Among the benefits of a hybrid setup is the ability to add effects to your drum sound straight out of the box. The advantage over using microphones is not only a lower cost, but also the ability to quickly enable or disable the effects between songs (or even sections), all from the comfort of our drum kit.

In this lesson, we'll be using some reggae groove variations as a platform for exploring the in-built effects of our hybrid module. Whichever hardware you're currently using will almost certainly have some customisable FX settings.

For this demonstration, I'm using a dual snare trigger that allows for separate samples depending on whether the head or rim of the drum is struck (for a refresher, head back to Issue 295).

This will allow a cross-stick sound to be assigned to the rim and a quintessential reggae timbale to be layered over the snare head. The effects we'll be using to enhance our one-drop reggae grooves are reverb and delay.

In the case of the Roland TM-6 Pro module, we can use the Pad FX menu to assign the delay to the snare drum and the Kit FX menu to apply a reverb. This means that only the snare runs through the delay while the whole kit will run through the reverb – very useful if we're using other triggers on the kit, such as bass drum and toms.

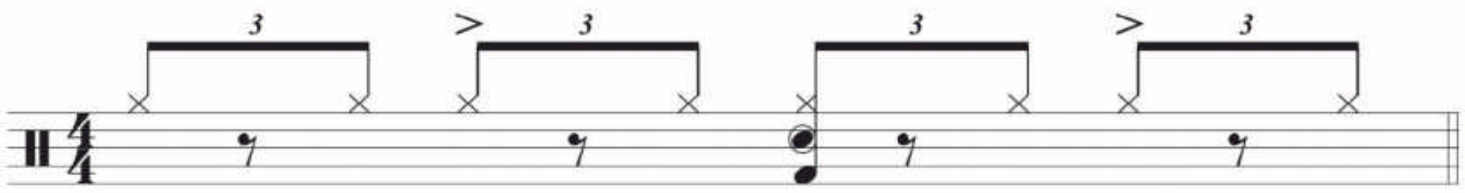
Check out the accompanying video for a full demonstration on all the points discussed here.

Tech Talk

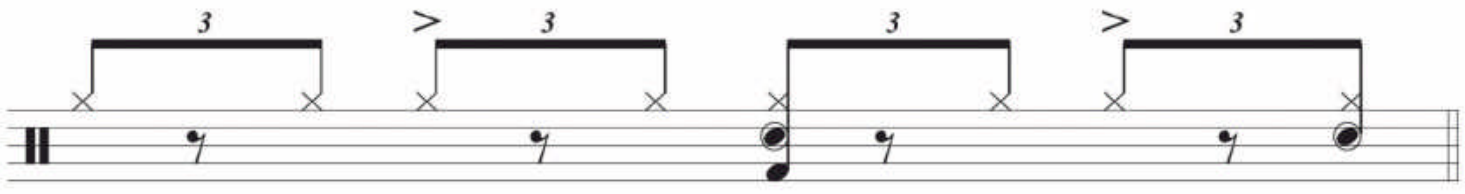
Timed Delay: We can program the delay effect to repeat within a specific subdivision. This not only ensures that it will stay completely in time with the click, but it also gives us a selection of musical options to explore.

Watch Tom's lesson now at www.youtube.com/c/RhythmMagazine

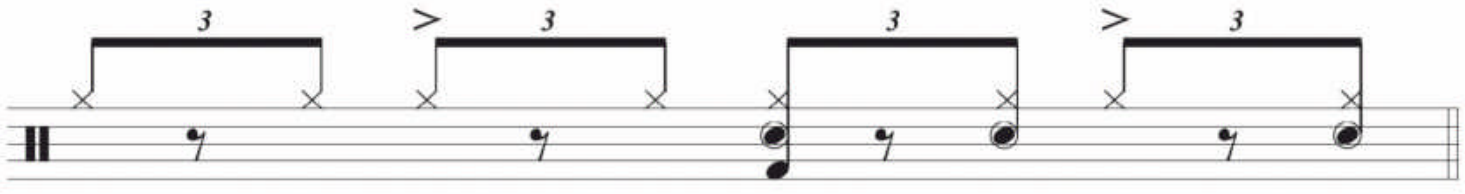
1 The swung one-drop reggae groove has a half-time feel with the bass drum and cross-stick on beat 3.



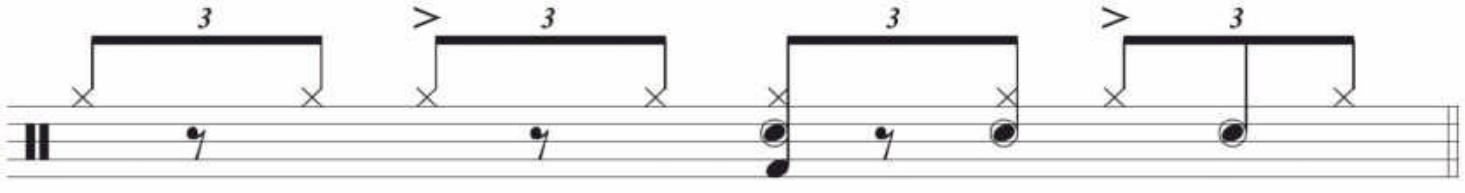
2 Here, we will embellish the groove with an additional cross-stick.



3 Again, the basic feel stays the same while we play with the left-hand part.



4 The left hand plays quarter-note triplets in the second half of the bar.



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POSITIVITY AND RESILIENCE IN A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Accepting, being positive and connecting are some of the most important skills to maintain during this challenging time says **Mike Sturgis**

Prior to 2020, it was taken for granted that the majority of musicians, regardless of their chosen genre, create music with other musicians for the purpose of it being listened to and appreciated by other people, often with both performers and audience together in the same room or venue. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 global pandemic has now severely limited physical gatherings, and musicians have been forced to find ways of pursuing their art and interacting with their audience while working in isolation.

And while the miracle of online technology allows people to stay connected to others anywhere on the planet, it is undeniable that it is difficult, if not impossible, to replicate a pre-pandemic musical experience.

So, with no definitive timeline available for the end of the pandemic at time of writing, what can musicians do to stay positive and resilient when so many opportunities for live rehearsal, performing and recording have been reduced or taken away?

Accepting

While there is no single answer to this challenge, there are a number of common themes that seem to be resonating with the larger musical community. First, it's possible that the simple act of accepting the situation as it currently stands may be a complete gamechanger to your perspective.

This is not to be confused with becoming passive or just giving up; rather, it is being mindful and present with the circumstances you are facing and ascertaining what is and isn't in your control. Going down a path filled with fear, stress or anger based on things that you can't control is a huge drain on your physical and mental energy. Doing this can feel like failure, so it's important in these times to be observant of your own thoughts and not identify with them.

This can take practice, and activities like meditation can be very helpful in developing this important skill. Being kind to yourself in every possible way (including getting good sleep and eating well) is crucial in optimising your resources and efficiency. Cultivating self-understanding and building capacity on an inner level through various forms of self-nurture will help to reduce unhelpful reactivity and protect your inner space.

Connecting

Working remotely has been prevalent in the music industry even before the pandemic, and 2020 has seen many composers, producers and performers take this to the next level.

However, in spite of the opportunities offered by working online, there is a palpable sense of loss (psychologically and monetarily) caused by not being able

Image: David Leisser

Emanuele Marchetti

Image: Lars Stephan

“THE SIMPLE ACT OF ACCEPTING THE SITUATION AS IT CURRENTLY STANDS MAY BE A COMPLETE GAMECHANGER TO YOUR PERSPECTIVE.”

to physically meet together. Regarding the feeling of creating music in the same room with other musicians and an audience, percussionist Karl Vanden Bossche (Gorillaz) says this: “It’s a great feeling, and I absolutely miss it, even when it’s just what’s happening in a rehearsal room. The buzz, the banter, the love and the communication – it’s all very important to me, whether it’s a small gig or one with 20,000 people”.

This loss of engagement with a physical community – along with the loss of professional earnings – has perhaps been one of the most difficult aspects for musicians during the pandemic, second only to being impacted personally by illness or even death.

And while creativity often requires solitude and inward reflection, isolation is not always beneficial with regards to creative output or wellbeing. This is why connecting with others can help, even if it’s nothing to do with your professional working life.

“Pick up the phone – don’t just text,” says Karl. “Speak to positive people with good energy who can pick you up and just give you a laugh. Everyone’s going through this, so we need to stay supportive of each other. I phone my friends a lot and we speak about food, football, movies, etc. It really helps.”

It’s when things are not working out for whatever reason that we may want to shut off and disconnect from others. Ironically, this is possibly when we need to connect most – to regain perspective and feel a sense of belonging.

Disconnecting

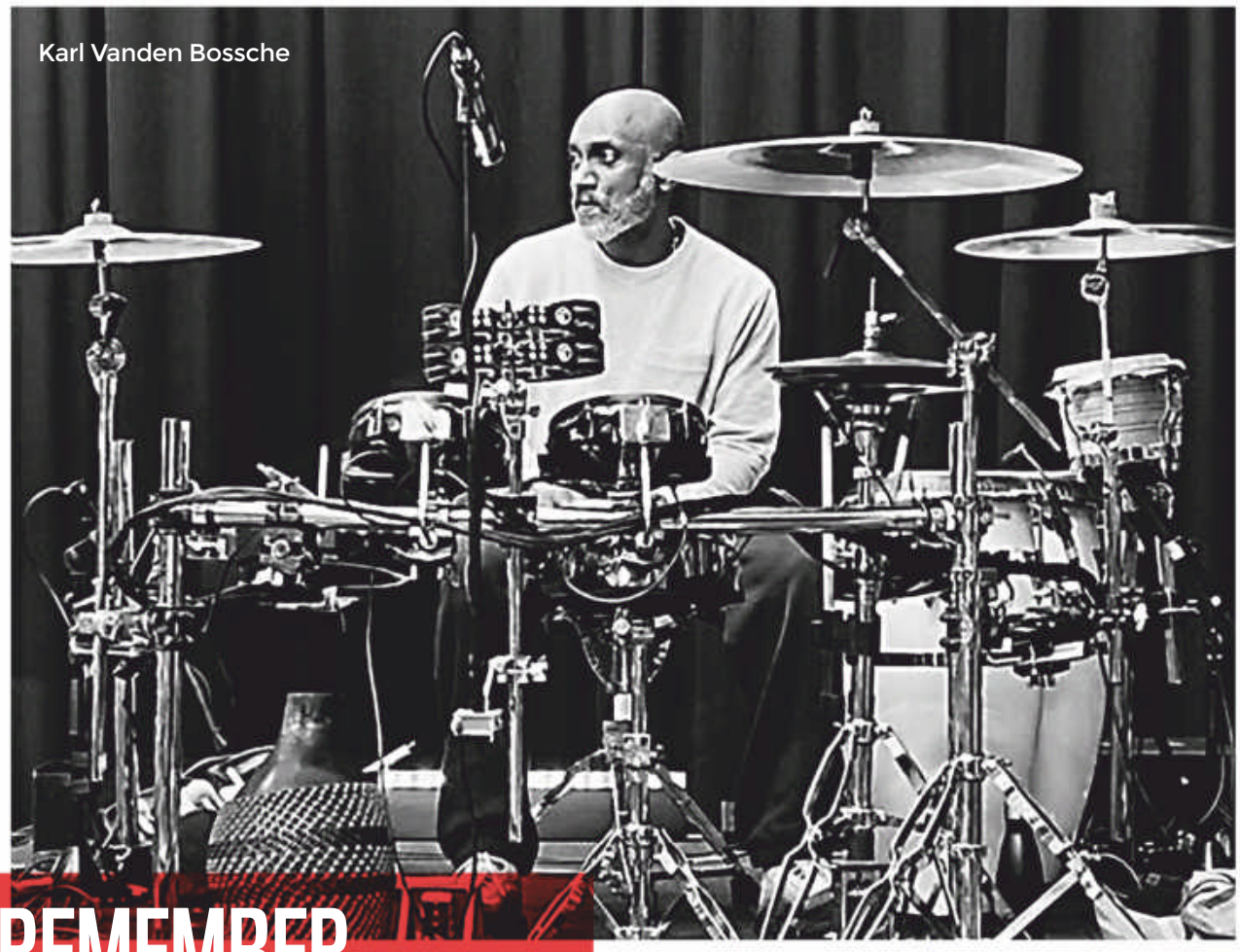
While we may need to become more proactive in reaching out to others to maintain much-needed connection, we conversely should consider reducing how much time we spend on our screens.

Those who already experience anxiety, depression and stress in their lives may feel overwhelmed with the avalanche of information from the media and beyond. Even if you don’t usually experience any form of mental unease, it might be something you begin to feel due to the lack of control that we’re all experiencing right now and the inability to make concrete plans for the future. Therefore, it’s important to find time to switch off and limit our exposure to news and social media, rather than endlessly tracking it.

As an alternative, you can make time for something that you enjoy, such as physical exercise or a new creative outlet like drawing or writing. Incorporating ▷

meditation and focused breathing into your day can drastically reduce stress and anxiety levels, enhance cognitive functioning and improve your overall physical and mental health.

Additionally, giving yourself permission to relax and 'waste time' doing something such as watching a film can reduce stress and unhelpful cognition. "Watch funny movies – don't just immerse yourself in music," says Karl. "Look at other things that bring a smile or inspire. There's always loads of inspiring and entertaining films to watch to take you out of yourself."


Karl Vanden Bossche

Learning

With so many cancelled engagements due to COVID-19, musicians everywhere have been keen to use their extra time productively by learning new skills and improving existing ones.

Karl's approach in this regard is straightforward: "Keep practicing! There's always a way you can practice, even if it's just on a pad. Learn new things – it's so good for your brain when you take on new challenges, persevere and then can finally say, 'I've got it!' That energy will give you a buzz and inspire you to play and practice more".

"IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT WHILE WE MAY BE PHYSICALLY ISOLATED, WE ARE NOT ALONE. TOGETHER, WE FORM A MASSIVE COMMUNITY OF CREATIVE PEOPLE WHO ARE ALL EXPERIENCING THE SAME THING."

Image: David Leisser

London session drummer and DIME Online graduate Emanuele Marchetti explains how he has used his lockdown time: "The lockdown has been a sort of reset time from a personal and musical perspective, where I could finally have the possibility to practice my instrument every day, focusing on styles of music that suit me the most and working on my chops and phrasings. Besides the playing aspect, I've started building up new skills that include audio and video editing through the use of multi-cameras and software like Final Cut Pro and Logic X. I've also been increasing my transcriptions with software like Transcribe and Sibelius and using these elements in the creation of tutorial videos and content for my social media channels to share with the drumming community, while developing my own brand and merchandise".

And while lockdown can be a good time for productivity and personal growth, it's important to set achievable targets so that you can monitor progress and reward yourself for each step forward. Creating a plan and routine for each day with small, realistic goals can be a great way of being productive without creating unnecessary stress and pressure for yourself. Setting short, medium and long-term goals – and regularly checking your progress towards each of these – can be hugely satisfying and help keep you on track when you may feel demotivated.

Conclusion

While we continue to find ways of navigating the many challenges presented by COVID-19, it's important to remember that while we may be physically isolated, we are not alone. Together, we form a massive community of creative people who are all experiencing the same thing. By maintaining connections with friends, family and collaborators, we help share the burden and are able to give and receive support.

Be observant of what you're feeling, with an awareness of what is and isn't in your control as you take action for change. And remember that nothing is permanent – while the world has been dominated by the pandemic in 2020, there are good reasons to believe that the situation can and will improve in 2021.

One thing is certain: our collective passion for creating, performing and enjoying music will not be diminished and will emerge stronger than ever when we are able to live life in a less-restricted environment.

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From prog rock brass arrangements to acid jazz grooves and creating impossible rhythms, Gavin Harrison picks out a sextet of his finest

Porcupine Tree

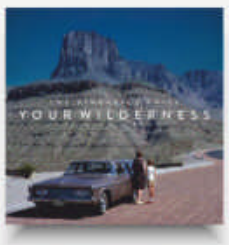
Track: 'The Sound Of Muzak'
Album: *In Absentia*, 2002

"That was really the beginning of my relationship with Porcupine Tree. I remember recording that song on the second day of the sessions.

"It was one of those days – it so rarely happens – where you pick up the sticks and everything just works great. The stars aligned. I was staying in a really nice hotel in Times Square, I walked through Manhattan to the studio, it was a spring day, the mood just took me."

The Pineapple Thief

Track: 'In Exile'
Album: *Your Wilderness*, 2016



"Another fresh start with a new band. They gave me completely free rein to do whatever I wanted. I took a lot of liberties! I even rearranged some of the songs, but [bandleader] Bruce Soord was very open to any suggestion – he said, 'Yeah, try it. I love it!' Strangely enough, it turned out to be the first track of that album, and I play a little drum intro, so it was an introduction for me to The Pineapple Thief."

Incognito

Track: 'Always There'
Album: *Inside Life*, 1991

"'Always There' was recorded at Swanyard Studios, London, and we all played as a band. This was in the good old days and it was onto analogue tape, so there was no chance of editing, moving that snare drum, splicing in a different fill. It just had to be basically one take. I love Bluey [Jean-Paul Maunick, bandleader], he was great fun. As long as it was funky and it felt good, there was a big smile on his face."

Gavin Harrison

Track: 'Hatesong/Halo'
Album: *Cheating The Polygraph*, 2015

"I took Porcupine Tree songs and, together with Laurence Cottle, rearranged them for a contemporary brass format. We put 'Hatesong' and 'Halo' back to back, even though they're very different tempos, by using a metric modulation in 'Hatesong' to get to the faster tempo of 'Halo', and then to get back, using groups of 3/16ths and then groups of four triplets to give what is a perceived new tempo. It's really an amazing piece."

Gavin Harrison & 05Ric

Track: 'Prize'
Album: *The Man Who Sold Himself*, 2012

"I did three albums with 05Ric. It's completely uncommercial; we didn't think we were going to sell more than three CDs. It really was an experiment in pushing our wildest dreams. I remember recording 'Prize' and thinking, 'This is the most ridiculous, out-there rhythm I've ever thought of'. It's unbelievable that we managed to do three tours playing that material. Out of the three records, 50% of the material we just couldn't perform as a band."

Porcupine Tree

Track: 'Cheating The Polygraph'
Album: *Nil Recurring*, 2007

"That was based off a drum rhythm I thought of as 7/16, then it goes into a 5/8 feel in the chorus. As with all the odd time things in Porcupine Tree, we didn't do them because we thought they were clever, we did them because we thought they were *interesting* and there was a musical reason to do them. The trick was to make it feel like it wasn't particularly odd, and the audience could still relate to it."

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